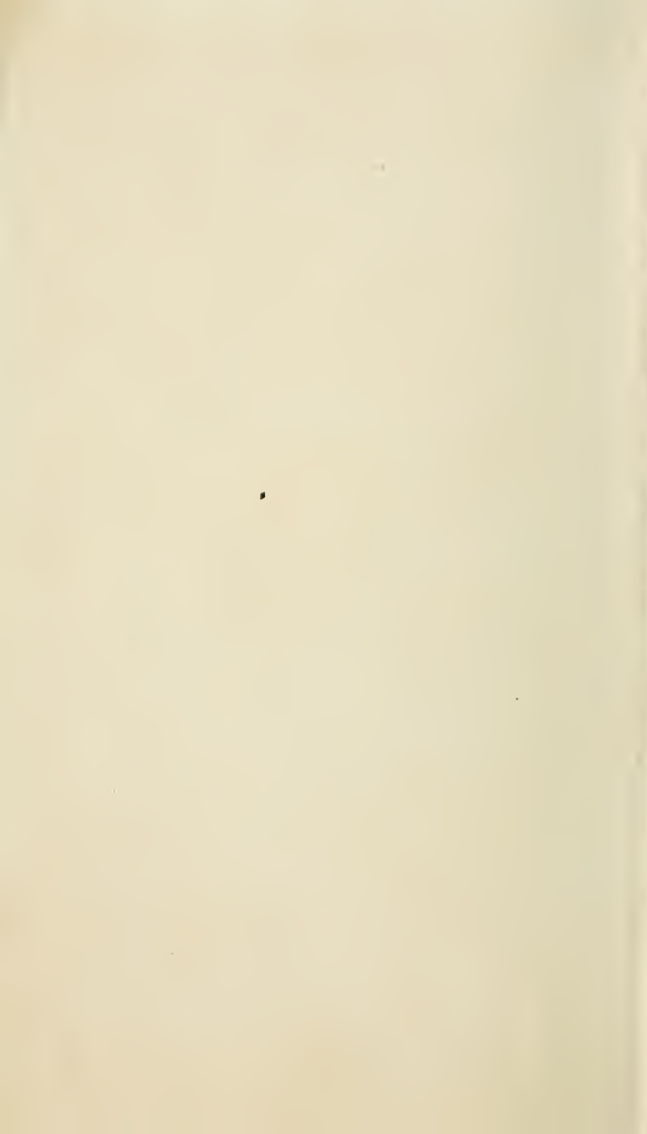


Bijou's  
Courtships  
"Gyp"





So Louis H de Feijoa

Very Cord & best wishes

his affectionate Sister

Katherine Perry de Feijoa

New York

Sept-27<sup>th</sup>

1896









*"She entered the hall blooming as a rose."*

CHAP. I.

# BIJOU'S COURTSHIPS

A STUDY IN PINK.

FROM THE FRENCH OF

G Y P,

AUTHOR OF

"CHIFFON'S MARRIAGE."

BY

KATHERINE BERRY di ZÉRÈGA.

WITH ORIGINAL DRAWINGS BY

S. B. ASPELL.



F. TENNYSON NEELY,  
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## BIJOU'S COURTSHIP.

### I.

THE Marchioness de Bracieux was working for her poor. She thrust her large amber-shell crochet-needle into a fluffy ball of wool, and laying the ball on her lap, raised her eyes and regarded her grandnephew Jean de Blaye.

"Jean, what in the world are you looking at that is so interesting? You are standing there flattening your nose against the window exactly as you used to do when you were a small child and incorrigible."

Jean de Blaye quickly turned his face, that had been pressed against the diamond pane of the bay-window, and answered with a slight hesitation:

"I? Why, nothing, aunt—nothing at all!"

"Nothing at all? Well, you are looking at it with a great deal of attention!"

"Don't believe him, grandmother," said Madame de Rueille in a beautiful grave voice.

"He is always hoping that a cab may appear at the turn of the avenue."

"Is he expecting any one?" inquired the marchioness.

Madame de Rueille explained, laughing:

"No, but a cab, even a cab from Pont-sur-Loire, would remind him of Paris."

"It is only one of Bertrade's jokes."

"'Even a cab from Pont-sur-Loire?'" said the marchioness. "One would say that Pont-sur-Loire, with its division of cavalry, its theater, and its faculty, was quite a town! Ah! indeed, if the president, Monsieur Dubuisson, were to hear you."

"Well, it isn't quite Paris, but it might remind amateurs of it."

Jean murmured without moving:

"Oh, I don't care so much about being reminded of Paris."

Madame de Rueille observed him with some surprise, and turning toward her grandmother remarked:

"One would almost say that he was sincere."

"Sincere, but absorbed," said the marchioness.

And addressing a young abbé who was playing lotto with the Rueille children, she asked:

"Monsieur l'Abbé, tell us is there anything interesting going on now on the terrace?"

The abbé, who was seated with his back to the great bay-window, looked over his shoulder and answered at once:

"I see nothing in the least interesting, Madame la Marquise."

"Nothing in the least," affirmed Jean.

And leaving the window, he came and sat down on a divan. One of the little De Rueilles, neglecting his lotto counters and leaving the abbé to repeat the numbers with invariable patience, had perched himself on a chair, and contorting his features, seemed to be making signs to some one.

"At whom are you making such horrible faces, little Marcel?" asked his grandmother.

"At Bijou," said the child. "She is out there picking flowers."

"Has she been there a long time?"

It was the abbé who answered:

"Ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, Madame la Marquise."

"And you think Bijou is not an interesting object to look at?" cried the old woman, laughing. "You are hard to please, Monsieur l'Abbé!"

The Abbé Courteil, who was quite new to the house and timid beyond belief, blushed from his collar to the roots of his very pale blond hair and murmured confusedly:

"*Mon Dieu!* Madame la Marquise. I thought when you asked if there were anything interesting taking place on the terrace you meant something extraordinary, and I didn't think that the presence of Mademoiselle Bijou—of Mademoiselle Denyse, I mean to say,

who gathers flowers for her baskets every day at this hour and at this place, could be considered——”

The sentence concluded in unintelligible fashion, and the abbé, highly embarrassed, went on shaking the numbers in a bag.

“Poor abbé!” said Bertrade de Rueille in an undertone. “You are worrying him, grandmother!”

“Why, no! Why, no! I’m not worrying him at all. You are exaggerating, little one.”

And after a moment’s reflection Madame de Bracieux resumed:

“So he is blind, this boy!”

“What boy?”

“Your abbé! *Parbleu!* He gives stupid answers!”

“But, grandmother——”

“You see that I will never believe that any man could look at Bijou gathering flowers and not find her an object of interest!”

“Never!”

“A man—yes, but Monsieur l’Abbé is not exactly a man.”

“Ah! What is he then, if you please?”

“Dear me! A priest is not——”

“He is not a man to do stupid things—no! at least I prefer to think so. But he has eyes, a priest, all the same! You will surely agree



that if he has not the eyes of a man he at least has the eyes of a woman. You will allow your abbé to have the eyes of a woman, will you not?"

"But, grandmother, I'm not preventing him from having any kind of eyes he pleases."

"Very good! Well, any woman who looks at Bijou can see that she is delightful to behold. Why should not an abbé perceive this fact also?"

"Poor abbé! You don't like him!"

"I? Oh! You know, I think, that priests are made for churches, not for homes. With this reservation I like your abbé as well as other abbés. I like him negatively. I respect him."

Bertrade began to laugh and said in caressing tones:

"It doesn't look like it. You are constantly tormenting him."

"I tease him—as I tease you all."

"Yes, but we are used to it; while he——"

"Well, I shall tease him no more. I shall be careful, but you can't imagine how much it will annoy me—I who am so fond of freedom of speech. Such an absurd idea of yours to engage an abbé for your children!"

"It was Paul's. He was most anxious that the children should be educated by a priest—at least in the beginning. He is very religious."

“But I also am very religious, and that is the very reason why I would never have had a priest for a tutor. Yes. If he is an intelligent man, you divert for the benefit of one, two, or more children, but in point of fact for a small number, an intellect whose professed occupation and whose true destiny was to direct a flock, to instruct, to pardon, to comfort creatures who in the majority of cases are more interesting than ourselves. If he is a block-head he will devote himself to conscientiously deforming the little being who is confided to his care. And in either case you are responsible for the evil that you do or the good that you prevent being done. Come! let me look at Bijou. That will amuse me more than talking about your abbé!”

And the marchioness pointed to her granddaughter, who was coming in like an animated basket of flowers.

Denyse de Courtaix, nicknamed Bijou, was a wonderful little creature, lissome and slender, yet withal a mass of dimples, with large violet eyes, limpid and deep; a straight nose, slightly turned up at the end; a tiny mouth, very red, with the corners gayly raised, showing the short teeth of a milky whiteness. Her soft and silky hair was of that blond cendré, now almost a thing of the past. Her tiny ears were tinted like pink mother-of-pearl. These

tints not only reappeared in her cheeks, but in her forehead, her neck, and her hands, and their bright rosy luster irradiated the entire skin. Her dark, delicately penciled eyebrows nearly met across the pure, intelligent forehead; they alone indicated that this frail and pretty creature had a strong will of her own.

Bijou, who appeared to be about fifteen or sixteen years old, had attained her majority eight days before, but her whole delicate and dainty person exhaled an aroma of childhood and spotless purity. Her charm, however, so penetrating and subtle, was rather that of a woman, and this contrast rendered Bijou perplexing and rare. The result was that she turned the heads of the men, pleased the women, and was adored by everybody.

As soon as she entered the hall, blooming as a rose in the pinkish cloud of her muslin gown, and suspended from her neck, with pink ribbons as well, a sort of market-basket overflowing with roses, every one surrounded her, rejoicing in the atmosphere of gayety that accompanied her and that pervaded the spacious hall, somewhat somber and empty before her advent.

Paul de Rueille, who was playing billiards with his brother-in-law, Henry de Bracieux, came and asked for a rose from the basket, while Henry following him took one without

asking. The little De Rueilles, abandoning the abbé, who went on calling off the lotto numbers in a monotonous tone, made one bound toward the young girl and hung on to her with all their strength. Their mother called them back.

"Do let Bijou alone. You are hurting her!"

"Robert! Marcel! come back here!" said the abbé, who arose.

Bijou protested.

"Oh, no! Let them alone. I like it!"

She took the basket off from her neck and went and placed it on the billiard-table, then suddenly stopping, exclaimed:

"Ah! no. I must consider the carom."

Henry de Bracieux murmured almost with emotion:

"Isn't she lovely? She thinks of everything."

"Come and kiss me, Bijou," said the marchioness.

Denyse had just placed her basket on a divan. She selected a full-blown rose and ran to her grandmother, whom she kissed repeatedly, in coaxing child-like fashion, then offering her the rose exclaimed:

"It's the most beautiful of them all!"

The tones of her voice were rather high, perhaps, but young and clear, and the enunciation was admirably distinct.

"Have you seen Pierrot?" inquired the marchioness.

"Pierrot?" replied Bijou, pausing as if to reflect. "Oh! yes, I have seen him. He even came for a moment to help me pick my flowers, and then he went off to rejoin his father, who is shooting rabbits in the little woods."

"I might have known it. That child never does anything!"

"But, grandmother, this is his vacation."

"Well, granting it is his vacation, it is none the less true that if he were given a tutor, it was natural that he should work."

"But he really ought to have a little rest once in awhile, poor Pierrot, and his tutor also."

"They never have anything else. However, if my brother knows it and approves——"

"He quite approves to-day, for it was he who told them to go and look for him in the woods."

"Who said anything about *them*?" inquired the old woman in a mocking tone. "Ah! was the tutor also picking roses?"

"Yes," said Denyse with her frank, sweet smile and without noticing her grandmother's sarcastic tones, "he was picking roses too."

The marchioness replied, glancing at a tall young man who was just coming in:

"It probably amused him more than shooting rabbits, for if he went to join your uncle in the woods he didn't stay with him very long."

"Surely, no!" said Bijou, in surprise.

Leaving her grandmother, she went up to the young man and said:

"Didn't you find my uncle, Monsieur Girand?"

He grew very red.

"Yes, mademoiselle—yes. We found Monsieur de Jonzac quite easily. Only I—I had to come back to correct Pierrot's exercises."

Wishing to explain, doubtless, his coming into the hall, he continued, with a slight embarrassment:

"And—I came to see if I had left my books here. I thought—but I don't see them."

As he was going out, without taking his eyes off of Bijou, the marchioness, with an indulgent and amused air, called him back.

"Are you not going to stay here and smoke, Monsieur Girand? Is there any hurry about the correction of those exercises?"

"No, madame," said the tutor quickly, "there is no hurry at all."

The old woman leaned over to Madame de Rueil, who was silently working on an admirable piece of tapestry, and smilingly observed to her:

"This one is not like your abbé."

Bertrade raised her pretty head and replied seriously:

"No!"

"You seem to pity him."

"I do indeed."

"And why?"

"Because this nice boy who came here fifteen days ago as gay as a lark, and who has made himself liked by us all, will leave here sad and unhappy, with his heart full of grief or bitterness."

"Oh, you always look on the darkest side. He thinks Bijou is a little love. He admires her—he likes to be near her, and there is an end of it."

"You know very well, grandmother, that Bijou is adorable, and so attractive that every one loses his head."

Here the marchioness drew attention to her grandnephew De Blaye, who since he had left the window seemed unconscious of everything that was going on around him, and rather indignantly observed:

"Every one? Not every one. Look at Jean. He is as blind as the abbé."

With impassive features, motionless in his easy-chair, Jean de Blaye appeared to be dreaming, with a far-off look in his eyes. The young woman regarded him and replied:

"I fear it is a feigned blindness."

"Oh, nonsense," said Madame de Bracieux, who was charmed at the idea. "You think that Bijou could interest Jean sufficiently to make him forget even for a little while his amusements, his horses, his theaters, his stupid life? Do you really think so?"

"I do."

"Since when?"

"Just now. He told us with such conviction that he didn't care to be reminded of Paris that I was sure that he meant what he said. Then I asked myself what could have caused him to forget it. I searched—and I have found out."

"Bijou?"

"Exactly."

"So much the better if that is so; but it doesn't appear so to me. He doesn't notice her."

"When he is observed."

"He seems sad—preoccupied."

"One would be, naturally. Jean never does things by halves. If he falls in love—I mean seriously—he will love violently, and if he is violently in love with Bijou or perceives that he is likely to be, there is no cause for rejoicing. He cannot, no matter how much he may wish to, marry Bijou, can he? Not only because he is her cousin, but still more, as he hasn't the requisite fortune."



“He has about 500,000 francs. Bijou has 200,000, to which I shall add 100,000—that makes 300,000; total between them, 800,000 francs.”

“Well, don’t you see that Bijou with an income of 80,000 francs——”

“No. I am perfectly sure that she would think that quite enough. She makes her own dresses—one always says that, but in this case it is true. She is industrious and clever and understands how to superintend a household wonderfully well, as for the last four years she has looked after everything both here and in Paris. But I am the one who could never resign myself to the idea of a mediocre existence for her, and that’s what she would have decidedly. God forbid that she should go and fall in love with Jean!”

“Oh! I don’t think it at all likely!”

“For the creature is charming, and as it appears very much liked.”

“Very much. But Bijou is so flattered, so surrounded, so adored that she hasn’t much leisure to love any one but herself.”

“And then she is such a child.”

And the marchioness regarded her granddaughter with infinite tenderness.

Standing near the billiard-table, Bijou was watching the game and laughing and teasing the players. A few steps from her, motion-

less, the young professor was contemplating her with ecstatic eye. Suddenly Jean de Blaye arose quickly and with an irritated air walked to the door that opened on the outside staircase.

"Wait a moment!" cried Denyse. "Wait till I give you a rose!"

She leaned over the basket and picked out a yellow rose not quite half-blown, and came and put it in her cousin's button-hole.

"There!" said she, drawing back with a satisfied smile. "You look very nice now."

Then going up to the tutor she said, with a delightfully graceful and kittenish air:

"Monsieur Giraud, will you have a rose too?"

And as, overcome and almost trembling, the young man strove, without success, to put the flower in his button-hole, she took it away from him very gently.

"You don't know how. Let me arrange it, will you?"

He was so tall that to reach him she had to stand on her toes; then she slipped in the flower slowly, with extreme care, and when she had finished, sweetly smiling and patting the shining lapel of the poor jacket, now quite destitute of form or color, she cried:

"There! Now it is perfectly lovely!"

Her eyes illumined with love, the marchion-

ess gazed at her grandchild, then said to Bertrade, who also seemed to be admiring her cousin:

“Ah! isn't she perfectly charming!”

Madame de Rueille looked at the young tutor, who, quite pale, had remained standing in the middle of the hall, and answered sadly:

“Poor boy!”

“Again? Why, really, Monsieur Giraud seems to interest you a good deal!”

“He does. I have a leaning to sad, sensitive natures, as I chance to be cheerful.”

“Oh! you are cheerful, are you? You have just said that Jean's blindness was feigned. Well, I consider that your cheerfulness is equally feigned—cheerful when you are observed!”

Without answering, the young woman glanced at Bijou.

“She is really gay and cheerful. Look at her, grandmother!”

Bijou having divided some of the flowers among the children, turned to the Abbé Courteil and said:

“I want to decorate you, too, Monsieur l'Abbé. Look! Now, isn't this a beautiful rose? Ah! there never was one more beautiful.”

And she handed him a huge thorny, thickly leaved rose, resembling a cabbage.

The abbé, who had arisen and was still holding the bag containing the lotto counters, drew back in alarm and murmured brokenly:

“Mademoiselle, it is a superb flower, only I shouldn’t know where to put it. The button-hole in my cassock is very small. The stem would never fit in it. I am very grateful to you, mademoiselle—I am very much touched—but there is no place for it.”

She laughed and answered:

“There is a place in your belt, Monsieur l’Abbé—there—see. One would say that it was made for it!”

Standing far back, she pushed the long stem of the flower into the belt of the cassock. He bowed awkwardly, and trying to express his gratitude exclaimed:

“I thank you, mademoiselle, for your kindness. I am very much touched—very much touched indeed.”

Every movement caused the rose to droop over the belt, that was much too loose and limp for it, so that it bobbed up and down absurdly, standing out in bold relief against the cassock, which hung in spiral curves around the abbé’s meager form.

When she had decorated everybody Bijou declared:

“Now I am going to arrange my baskets.”

“Where?” asked Monsieur de Rueille.

"Why, in the dining-room, in the drawing-room, in the vestibule—here, everywhere!"

Several voices cried:

"We are going to help you!"

"Oh! indeed you're not. Instead of helping me you will only bother me awfully!"

She took up her basket again and went out, gay and rosy in the flying cloud of her skirts, as rosy as herself. And when she had disappeared a veil of sadness fell over the large hall. No one spoke. Nothing could be heard but the clicking of the balls and the rustling of the counters, which the abbé was still shaking methodically, observing system in this as in everything. At last Henry de Bracieux said:

"Grandmother, you ought never to allow Bijou to drop us like that, particularly at Bracieux, because at Paris one can manage; but here when she leaves us we are lost. She is the sunbeam that illumines all the house."

The marchioness shrugged her shoulders.

"You are talking nonsense. You forget that before long Bijou will 'drop' us, as you so elegantly express it, for good and all."

"What! is she going to be married?"

"Dear me! I hope so."

"Have you any one in view?" asked Monsieur de Rueille, with an air of displeasure.

"No, no one at all. But, then, some one

may present himself any day. No one here would answer for Bijou, but it is likely that in Paris this winter——”

Henry de Bracieux, a handsome youth of twenty-five, who strongly resembled his sister Bertrade, listened with contracted brows and a serious face. He missed making an easy carom, and as his brother-in-law expressed some surprise he exclaimed:

“Ah, yut! It is too hot to play billiards. I am going to sleep in the hammock.”

His sister looked at him as he went out and murmured in the marchioness' ear:

“He, too!”

The old woman replied with some vexation:

“Bijou cannot very well marry all the family. But we must stop talking—here she is!”

And in fact the delicate outline of the young girl's figure appeared at the door which opened on the exterior staircase. Without entering she asked:

“How many people for dinner on Friday, grandmother?”

“Dear me! I haven't counted them. There are the La Balues——”

“That makes four.”

“The Jugencourts——”

“Six.”

“Little Bernès——”

"Seven."

"Madame de Nezel——"

"Eight."

"That's all."

"And we are ten, to begin with. That makes eighteen. We might have twenty. Will you invite the Dubuissos, grandmother? It will give me so much pleasure to have Jeanne."

"I should like nothing better. I'll go and write to them now."

"It isn't worth while. I have to go to Pont-sur-Loire for some shopping, and I will invite them."

"What! my poor little dear! You are going to town in all this heat?"

"I really ought to see about the dinner. To-day is Tuesday, and then I have to see Mother Rafut and engage her for several days. I have no gowns, and there are the races, the balls——"

"Oh!" said the marchioness, with some annoyance, "are you going to have that horrid old woman here again?"

"She is such an honest woman and she does such good work."

"Possibly; but I don't like her looks."

"Oh, grandmother, it is true that she isn't pretty, but Mother Rafut is old and poor. One doesn't make much money when one is a

dresser at the Pont-sur-Loire theater at night and goes out sewing by the day to some of the houses in town. Old age and poverty do not improve one's looks. And then she suits me so well; and as she is very badly paid by the actresses, or not paid at all, she is so happy to be here, well paid, well fed, and well treated."

She was standing behind Madame de Bracieux's easy-chair, and she added coaxingly, winding her pretty pink arms around her neck:

"It is a charity, grandmother—an act of charity, not only to Mother Rafut, but to me."

The marchioness replied:

"You may have your frightful old woman—have her as long as you please!"

"Then *au revoir, à tantôt!*"

"How are you going down there—in the victoria?"

"No—in the village cart. I shall go more quickly. I can go in the village cart in twenty-five minutes."

"And you are going to drive?"

"Why, yes, grandmother."

"In this heat? You will have a sunstroke!"

Monsieur de Rueille then proposed:

"Would you like me to drive you, Bijou? I have to buy some tobacco, some powder, and two fishing-rods to replace those that Pierrot



has broken. I shall be delighted to go to town."

"And I enchanted to have you drive me."

"When shall we leave?"

"At once, if you please!"

As they were going out the marchioness cried after them:

"Don't go too fast down the hills! Take care not to have any accidents!"

And Bijou answered laughingly:

"Don't worry, grandmother. Nothing ever happens to me!"

## II.

As they were driving through Pont-sur-Loire that evening on their return to Bracieux, Monsieur de Rueille said to Denyse:

“ Well, do you know, my little Bijou, that one does not pass unnoticed when one is with you? Ah, no, indeed !”

She looked at the passers-by, who were turning around to gaze after her with manifest interest, and replied:

“ It is my pink gown that——”

“ No, it isn't your gown at all. They are looking at you !”

Her large violet eyes opened still wider as she asked:

“ At me? But why?”

“ Oh ! little Bijou, it isn't right for you to try to deceive your old cousin !”

With a still more mystified air she questioned:

“ I try to deceive?”

“ *Dame !* It looks like it ! It isn't possible that you don't know how pretty you are? In the first place, you have eyes. Then they tell you often enough for——”

"They tell me? Who do you mean tells me?"

"Why, everybody! Even I, who am almost your uncle, and also almost venerable."

" 'Almost my uncle,' no, as Bertrode happens to be my first cousin; and as to being 'almost venerable——' "

She stopped a moment and burst out laughing.

"You flatter yourself."

"Alas! no! I am nearly forty-two."

She regarded him with a surprised air and said:

"Dear me! You don't look it!"

"Thank you! There! Do you see how all the natives are staring at you? I can assure you, Bijou, that when I come here by myself to do my shopping they don't look at me with so much eagerness."

"But I tell you it is the pink gown that astonishes them."

"Why should it astonish them? You often come to Pont-sur-Loire and you are always in pink."

Since she had left off mourning for her parents, who had been dead for four years, Denyse had always worn pink. She said it was because her grandmother liked to see her in it. In any case, a very faint, delicate pink, the sort of fallen-rose-leaf effect that she

always wore and that was precisely the tint of her skin, was wonderfully becoming to her. In damp or cold weather she always wore long dark cloaks that entirely concealed her figure, and when she emerged from these somber coverings, rosy and fresh as a flower, she diffused an atmosphere of light and radiance. Her gowns were of batiste, muslin, and wool, materials comparatively cheap. The most that she ever permitted herself was some little taffetas or foulard. And what simplicity of form! Always the same little pleated blouses, the same plain skirts; never the slightest ornament, hardly even in winter some light little cape of fur.

After appearing to reflect for a moment she said:

“You are right! I always do wear pink. Do you think it is ugly?”

“Ugly? Great heavens! I think it is most fascinating. I repeat, Bijou, that if I were not such an old man I should be making love to you all the time!”

“You are not an old man!”

“Thank you again. But if you don't think I am exactly an old man, which in fact is open to dispute, at least I am a married man.”

“That is true, and so much the better for you; for there are no men more stupid and annoying than those who make love.”

"Then you must see a fearful lot of stupid and annoying people."

"Why?"

"Because every one makes love to you, more or less."

"Why, no. Think for a moment. I have been isolated like a savage; for while papa and mamma were alive they were always ill and I was shut up with them, never seeing a soul, and it isn't quite four years now since I have seen any people."

"Oh, yes. Quite enough of them, I should say."

"One would think that it displeased you."

She glanced sideways at Rueille, her eyes gleaming between the half-closed lids, while he answered, growing rather nervous despite his efforts:

"Displeased me? And why? Have I anything to do with your life? Have I any authority where you are concerned?"

"Which means that if you had any authority?"

"Well, it is true there are many changes and reforms I should make—that I should advise, I mean to say."

"For example?"

"For instance, I would not allow you, if I were your grandmother, to be so charming—so gracious to every one. I should like to keep

you for myself a little more—to prevent you from giving so much of yourself to strangers.”

Thoughtfully and almost sadly she replied:

“ Well, perhaps you are right.”

“ Particularly as we shall have you to ourselves for so short a time.”

Her great, sweet, innocent eyes stared at Paul de Rueille, who resumed:

“ You will marry soon—you will leave us——”

Bijou began to laugh.

“ How you go on! There is no question of my marrying at present that I know of.”

“ None, in fact. At least I don't think so. But on principle that is the all-important question, and grandmother thinks of nothing else.”

“ Oh, yes! But then I am not like her, for I myself never think of it at all.”

She added, suddenly growing serious:

“ Besides, my marriage is problematical.”

“ Problematical?”

“ *Mon Dieu*, yes. In the first place, I wish to be married by a person who cares for me.”

“ Well, don't worry. You won't have any trouble about that.”

She concluded, and her clear voice grew almost grave:

“ I should also like to care for him.”

“ You will care for him. One always likes one's husband, and he will be happy.”

"Who do you mean?"

"The man whom you will love."

"I hope so. I should do my best to make him so."

Monsieur de Rueille seemed irritated and cross, and said, as if he wished to discourage this dream of Denyse:

"Yes, but suppose you should never meet such a person?"

"Well, then, I should 'dress Saint Catherine's hair;' that's all there is about it. But I don't see why I shouldn't meet him. I don't ask for impossibilities, after all."

In a teasing and rather aggressive tone Rueille replied:

"Is it indiscreet to ask what you desire?"

"Oh! not the least in the world, for I can only tell you what I have said before—'I wish to love him.' Truly. I don't care for money. I neither understand nor do I care for money."

She turned toward her cousin, and looking him straight in the face ended by saying:

"And so, do you see, I could very well make such a marriage as Bertrade's."

"With another husband?" he murmured.

Without the least embarrassment she answered sweetly and unaffectedly, her face wreathed in smiles:

"Why, no! Why, no! I think the husband is good enough."

Monsieur de Rucille did not reply. He was affected despite himself by the thought that Bijou could have loved him. He found the evening air delicious, and never had the rays of the setting sun slowly sinking into the Loire appeared to him more luminous. The little cart was so narrow that each vibration caused his elbow to brush the young girl's arm, while the locks of her fine blond hair that had escaped from the large straw hat swept his burning cheek.

Bijou perceived his preoccupation and laughingly observed:

"It seems to me that you are not listening much to the description of my 'ideal.'"

"Why, yes!"

"Why, no! That reminds me: have we executed all our commissions?"

She took a long list from her pocket and began to read it over:

"Ices.

"Little cakes.

"Fish.

"The Dubuissos.

"Speak to the butcher.

"Pink gauze.

"Mother Rafut.

"Hat.

"Pierrot's books.

"Henry's cartridges."



Monsieur de Rueille, who was looking over the list, asked:

“What! Henry asked you to bring back his cartridges instead of speaking to me about it?”

“Yes. The time before last you forgot them, and the last time you brought him 12 caliber cartridges when he wanted 16. So he preferred——”

“I understand. But they impose upon you, and the children have imposed on you too—‘Marcel’s balloon’—‘pencils for Robert.’ Fred is the only one who hasn’t given you any commissions. But you mustn’t despair—he is only three years old. You will have them next year.”

“He didn’t give me any commissions, but I have brought him some pictures—‘Puss in Boots.’ He adores cats—this will amuse him.”

“How delightful you are!”

“Delightful? Is that saying quite enough? Couldn’t you think of something a little more eulogistic? Let us see—if you were to try hard?”

She went on looking over the list.

Paul de Rueille pointed with the handle of his whip to a line written in pencil and asked:

“What is that—‘Tell grandmother that La Norinière?’”

"Oh! I met the Juzncourts, and they begged me particularly to tell grandmother that La Norinière is going to be occupied."

"Ah! Clagny has sold it?"

"No, but he is coming back. It appears that he intends coming here every summer."

"Ah! So much the better. This is going to give your grandmother a great deal of pleasure."

"Yes. She likes him so much. I don't know Monsieur de Clagny, but I have very often heard him spoken of."

"Don't you remember seeing him formerly?"

"Why, no."

"He was your godfather, however."

"You are dreaming. Uncle Alexis was my godfather."

"Uncle Jonzas is the godfather of Denyse, but Monsieur de Clagny is the godfather of 'Bijou.' Yes, it was he who, when you were quite little, used to say in speaking of you, 'the bijou,' and the name suited you so well that it has clung to you."

"Don't you think that it is rather ridiculous to call me Bijou now that I am old?"

"You look as if you were fourteen, and you always will, I can promise you."

"Are you not going a little too far, perhaps?"

She looked at him and laughed. He also gazed at her, unable to look away from the fresh, pretty face that was turned toward him, and as he was paying no attention to the short cut in the road, which was in a very bad condition, the right wheel stuck in a rut and the little cart half fell over, throwing Denyse on top of him, who hung on to him with all the strength of her arm. They remained suspended for a moment, when the wheel worked its way out as well as it could of the deep hole where it had stuck, and the horse resumed his rapid pace.

“Ouf!” said Bijou, who was laughing with all her might. “I really thought that we were going to tip over!”

He replied quite seriously:

“We very nearly did.”

She loosened her little fingers, that had been buried in her cousin's shoulder, and asked:

“Have you really finished? I hope you are not going to begin again.”

Monsieur de Rueille regarded her without answering, preoccupied and unnerved, and she resumed:

“But instead of looking at me, look straight before you or we shall get caught in another rut. You see if we don't.”

But he only murmured in a low tone:

“Why, no—why, no.”

He spoke as if he were dreaming, and Bijou said:

"I bet that we shall be late for dinner, and you know grandmother doesn't like it."

Rueille with his whip lightly touched the pony on the shoulder, which made him leap forward and then break into a mad gallop.

Bijou now seemed confounded.

"What on earth," questioned she, "is the matter with you to-day? A moment ago you nearly tipped us over, and now you are touching Colonel with the whip, when you shouldn't even let him think that you had any."

She added, seeing that the horse was quieting down:

"Or very nearly. You're not yourself at all."

He replied mechanically:

"No, I am not myself."

At the first jump of the pony Denyse had again seized Monsieur de Rueille's arm. Not that she was the least in the world afraid, but because, seated on the little bench that was too high for her, she had no security and tried to hang on to something firm. Leaning toward her cousin, she asked with interest:

"Not yourself? What is the matter with you? Are you ill?"

"Ill? No!"

"For you mustn't be ill. We have to work

on the review this evening, and if you don't try your best it will never be finished in time for the race ball."

"I am getting a little tired of the review, and if I were you——"

He stopped short, embarrassed, and Bijou asked:

"What? What is it? You were going to say something?"

"Yes, in fact I wanted to tell you that the design that Jean has made for your—for the costume of Hebe——"

"Well?"

"Well, this costume isn't sufficiently draped."

"But it is."

"Come, now! Ought a woman—a young girl like you to appear like that? Why, it isn't nice."

Bijou regarded Paul de Rueille with an amazed air. Then laughing in his face cried:

"Oh! How funny you are! You act exactly like a jealous husband!"

He murmured, vexed and ill at ease:

"Jealous? I have no right to be jealous. I——"

"Of course! But without being jealous you men don't like that a woman should seem pretty or graceful or amusing to any one but yourselves."

"Well, admitting that such is the case, it's natural enough."

"You think so? Well, a woman, on the contrary, is glad to have the men whom she likes admired. It pleases her to see them please others."

"*Turlututu!* You don't know what you're talking about."

They remained for a moment without saying a word, she tranquil and smiling, he serious and troubled. Just as the carriage was entering the avenue Bijou turned to Monsieur de Rueille, and touching him, this time very gently, with her soft hand, she said, in a penetrating voice, which completely upset him:

"Since it displeases you so much I won't wear that costume. We will make Jean design another."

He seized the hand that was leaning on his arm and pressed it violently to his lips.

Bijou appeared not to observe the transport and only said, drawing back her hand, while between her lashes there shone a strange light:

"Look out for the gate. There's a sharp turn, you know. You are not in luck to-day!"

Then she began quietly to gather up all her little parcels, and until they reached the castle remained silent and absorbed.

The first dinner-gong was sounding. Bijou ran up to her room, and ten minutes after-

ward she entered the drawing-room perfectly dressed in a fresh gown of rose-leaf chiffon, and on the shoulders a large bunch of roses.

"What! Here already," said Madame de Rueille in admiration. "I bet that child Paul isn't ready yet."

"Have you executed all your commissions?" inquired the marchioness.

"Yes, grandmother, and I have a message for you. The Jurzaneourts charged me to tell you that Monsieur de Clagny is coming back to live at Norinière and that he will come every year."

"Oh!" said Madame de Bracieux with a thoroughly pleased air—"oh! that gives me a great deal of pleasure. I never hoped to see him back in this country."

"Why?" inquired Bijou.

"Because he had a great sorrow here, at an age when painful impressions are never effaced."

"At what age, aunt?" said Jean de Blaye rather sarcastically.

"Forty-eight. You will be less of a cynic at that age, my boy, and you will reach it sooner than you think."

"So much the better," he answered smilingly. "It ought to be the ideal age—the age when the heart slumbers."

"It slumbers sooner sometimes," replied

the marchioness sarcastically, regarding her nephew:

Jean shrugged his shoulders and observed:

"Yes, but it wakes again. Or, it, may be reawaken. One can never be sure, while at forty-eight."

"You think so? My old friend Clagny was forty-eight years old twelve years ago, so he must be sixty now. Well, I wager that his heart has never slumbered—never. Do you understand?"

Jean began to laugh and exclaimed:

"*Bigre!* Why, he is a phenomenon, your friend. He would make a good deal of money by exhibiting himself."

"He has no need of it."

"Is he rich?"

"Awfully."

"How rich?"

"Four hundred thousand a year. Don't you think that is nice?"

"Yes, decidedly nice for any one who hasn't stolen it."

Then he inquired:

"What was this great grief that he had?"

"I will tell you when Bijou isn't here."

Bijou, however, couldn't have heard anything. She was playing with Pierrot, who had just come in, and was trying to part his hair for him.



Pierrot, a great overgrown boy of seventeen and a vigorous youth who had shot up too quickly, with long feet, long hands, and a forehead covered with unnatural bumps, was stooping over so that the young girl could reach up to his bushy and lusterless locks. With his neck stretched forward and a vague look in his eyes he seemed to be enjoying the soft touch of her small, skillful fingers.

Suddenly Denyse turned toward the marchioness and exclaimed:

"Grandmother, I had forgotten—the Dubuissons cannot come to dinner on Thursday, but Monsieur Dubuisson will bring Jeane on Friday and leave her here for eight days."

"Then we are only eighteen for dinner."

"We are still twenty, because I saw the Ivurielles and I asked them for you. I thought that——"

"You did perfectly right."

"Oh!" said Bertrode, "the Ivurielles with the Juzencourts! Now we shall be bored with stories of William the Conqueror and Charles the Bold."

Bijou cried out laughingly:

"So much the better. In that way we shall at least only hear them once."

Just as they were announcing dinner Monsieur de Rueille entered, with a preoccupied air and shining eyes. Silently he seated himself at the table and sat there without a word.

## III.

IN the hall Bijou, aided by Pierrot, was serving the coffee. Suddenly she darted away in pursuit of Paul de Rueille, who had just gone out of the drawing-room and was going down the terrace stairs.

"Well! well! Where are you going now?" cried she.

He answered without stopping:

"Why, to take a little walk and to breathe, if it is possible, in such heat."

Bijou had already joined him.

"Ah! but no. There's the review. You must come and work."

"I have a headache."

"It will cure you. You must come, positively. We haven't more than three days now."

"But," said Rueille, irritated, "I am not indispensable."

"Oh, nonsense! You are the one who writes."

"Under dictation. To do that doesn't require an adept."

"Yes! We are used to you."

She was standing on the step above him,

and leaning over she threw her arms around his neck and entreated him coaxingly.

"My little Paul, come, to give me pleasure. It would be so nice of you—so nice!"

Monsieur de Rueille quickly unwound the soft, fresh arms and answered in a harsh voice:

"Very well! Very well! I'll come!"

The young girl drew back, and he could see her great, surprised eyes shining in the clear night. Then she said timidly:

"How rough you are! What is the matter with you?"

As he did not answer she insisted:

"Won't you tell me?"

"Ah! no," said he dryly.

And going up the stairs he entered the drawing-room. Bijou going in directly behind him said to Bertrode:

"I don't know what is the matter with your husband. He's a perfect porcupine!"

Madame de Rueille looked at Paul, who with a drawn face and nervous air was affecting to talk and laugh noisily with the tutor, who remained, however, reticent and silent. And after having looked she replied, somewhat anxious about her husband's strange manner:

"Something is surely the matter with him, but I don't know what."

But Bijou, recurring to her first idea, exclaimed:

"Just imagine—Paul wanted to go and take a walk instead of working! Ah! didn't I have a time getting him to come in!"

Resigned to his fate, Monsieur de Rueille had seated himself at a marble-topped Empire table. He took up the manuscript, opened it where he had left off, and said, dipping a long quill pen into the ink:

"Whenever you're ready."

"But in the first place where are you?" inquired Monsieur de Jonzac.

"At scene third of the second act."

"Still?" said Bijou in astonishment.

"Alas! still."

"My dear grandchildren, you will never finish it," said the marchioness conclusively.

"Why, yes! Why, yes, grandmother!" said Bijou gayly. "You shall see what a lot of fine new work we are going to do."

"Come! We are at the third scene of the second act. It is where the poet-symbolist defends himself from the rather malevolent accusations brought against him by Venus."

As no one said anything, Monsieur de Rueille asked:

"And then?"

"Then," explained Bijou, "according to my ideas there ought to be a little verse. What do you say about it, Jean?"

With an absorbed air, his head leaning

against the back of a large easy-chair, Jean, who was far away in dreamland, did not hear the question.

"Are you asleep?" cried Bijou.

Turning to her he inquired:

"Are you speaking to me?"

"*Mon Dieu!* yes. I have that honor. I am asking you if a verse wouldn't come in well here—a verse set to some well-known air?"

"Yes, very well," he replied vaguely.

"Good! Then compose one!"

Jean jumped up and exclaimed:

"Must I do it? But why should I?"

"Because you are the one who always composes them."

"There's a reason for you!" protested Jean.

"That is just why it is some one else's turn. You have only got to set Henry to work, or Uncle Alexis, or Monsieur Giraud, or even Pierrot."

"Why, 'even?'" asked Pierrot with vexation.

"How do you know but that I can compose verses quite as well as you?"

"Compose them, then. As for me, I've had enough of it."

"Jean," said Bijou imploringly, "don't leave us in the lurch, I beg of you."

And she walked toward him, her lips advanced in a beseeching and droll little pout.

Monsieur de Rueille had seen the movement. He got up quickly, and stopping her on the way exclaimed:

“Oh, but he will compose your verses. That’s all he asks for. Go and sit down.”

Denyse stood perfectly still in the middle of the hall, amazed at this singular behavior. At last she replied:

“But it is your place to go and sit down. Why do you leave your table?”

“Ah! haven’t I the right to leave it without permission?”

“Jean!” recommenced Bijou. “Come, Jean!”

Again Monsieur de Rueille interposed and said in a cutting tone:

“Why don’t you get down on your knees to him?”

“Oh! dear me! I’d just as soon, if that can decide him.”

She was flying toward her cousin, when Monsieur de Rueille seized her by the arm, exclaiming angrily:

“Come, now! This is ridiculous!”

She murmured, looking at him in astonishment:

“It is you who are ridiculous.”

He replied in hard tones:

“Oh, yes, of course. It is I who must go and sit down. It is I who am ridiculous. It

is I who am everything that I ought not to be and who do everything I ought not to do."

"What is the matter now, my children?" inquired Madame de Bracieux.

Monsieur de Jonzac, carefully tapping his pipe against a piece of furniture in order to knock out the ashes, then explained:

"Heaven forbid! it is Paul who is quarreling with Bijou."

"With Bijou?" said the old woman, overcome with surprise. And Madame de Rueille repeated, laying down the paper she was reading: "Paul quarreling with Bijou? It isn't possible!"

The Abbé Courteil, who was scandalized, also affirmed:

"Indeed yes! Monsieur le Comte has been scolding Mademoiselle Denyse."

"Come here, Bijou," said the marchioness.

The young girl ran and curled herself up on a cushion at her grandmother's feet, while Monsieur de Rueille went up to Jean and said to him in an undertone:

"You ought to prevent Bijou from acting like that with you."

"Like what? Ah! you are dreaming."

"I am not dreaming the least in the world. After all, Denyse is twenty years old."

"Twenty-one."

"That makes it still worse. She ought to behave better."

"But the poor child behaves beautifully," said Jean, and added, looking straight at his cousin:

"I don't know what on earth is the matter with you!"

Monsieur de Rueille murmured with some embarrassment:

"I am wrong—naturally I am wrong."

"Absolutely," said Blaye dryly, who then arose.

On seeing him get up Bijou left the marchioness, and running toward him cried:

"Oh! but you are not going away? Grand-mother, forbid him to leave us."

"Come, Jean," said the marchioness, half-amiably, half-scoldingly, "don't be such a tease as all that."

The young man sat down again and assumed a melancholy air, saying:

"And this is the country—repose—vacation! One works like a negro. One writes reviews—reviews with verses in them. One goes to bed regularly at two o'clock in the morning. This is what is called 'seeking green fields!'"

Pierrot, who appeared to be listening with profound attention, observed sarcastically:

"Go on, old man. You interest me greatly."

And as Bijou laughed, Jean, with an air of annoyance, turned to Pierrot.



"You are very clever, little one."

Madame de Bracieux's voice could now be heard.

"My children, you are unbearable."

She looked at them in surprise, asking herself what war-cloud had suddenly arisen, not understanding any of these disagreeable speeches, these hostile attitudes, that she was observing for the first time. And again she called Bijou to her, who seemed to be questioning everybody, her great eyes full of surprise.

"Do you know what is the matter with them?"

With an innocent and wondering air she replied:

"I haven't the least idea, grandmother."

"Can't you see how they are going on?"

"Yes, but I don't know why. If it is on account of the review let us give it up. Simply because the review amuses me—amuses me greatly—I shouldn't like to make every one miserable."

Monsieur de Rueille now exclaimed:

"Are we working? Yes or no. I have had enough of being here waiting like a fool."

"Where are we?" asked Jean, with an air that seemed to signify, "Since it must be, it must."

Rueille replied:

"You've already been told where we are—you've been told twice."

Bijou explained sweetly:

“Where the poet-symbolist has to answer Venus.”

“Ah! yes. I know now. She accuses him of a lot of things and you want him to defend himself.”

“In a verse.”

“I quite understand. Where are you going?”

“I am going,” said Bijou, who was crossing the drawing-room, “to sit beside Monsieur Giraud. He will not tease me.”

The tutor blushed and made himself quite small on the divan where he was seated. Denyse slipped down near him and declared:

“We are listening.”

Jean, who was twisting around a pencil and a piece of paper, now asked:

“What is Venus’ reply?”

While Monsieur de Rueille with an air of indifference, was idly watching a moth flying around the lamp in front of him, several voices repeated in deafening tones:

“What is Venus’ reply?”

Overcome by the racket and stopping up his ears, he read:

“Thou knowest, I believe,  
Not a word——”

“Rub it out,” said Jean, “and write, ‘I do

not believe it at all, thou must know,' and now the symbolist replies:

The soul of a symbolist,  
If you but knew,  
Is an amethyst jewel-case  
Somber of hue,  
Which a lock holds secure,  
Formed of diamonds pure.  
When once it is opened, then all is revealed,  
For the treasure that lay there, unguessed and concealed,  
Bursts forth in its beauty, illumines the room,  
And smiles on a lover's sad lips succeed gloom.

"Isn't it funny?"

"*Mon Dieu !*" said Jean, annoyed. "I don't say that it is a pure *chef-d'œuvre*. Bijou asks me for a verse—I compose one for her as well as I can. I don't hinder you from writing another."

"To what air are we going to sing that?" said Bijou.

"Ah, yes, that is true. We must have an air. What air?"

Rueille advised:

"Put it to 'I am watching a boy of my age.'"

"Will it go?"

"What do you mean by 'Will it go?'"

"To what air?"

"I don't know anything about it. I don't know the air."

"Then why did you say to take it?"

"Because I often hear it alluded to—'I am watching a boy of my age.' I have it on the brain. There are a lot of verses in it."

"But," observed Bijou, "the symbolist's lines are longer than those, particularly the four last. You could never sing them to that air."

"Why, yes! I didn't think of that!"

"Fortunately, Bijou thinks of everything," said Pierrot proudly.

Jean resumed:

"We will look up an air later on. Let us go on, otherwise we shall never finish."

"Who is on the stage now?"

As Monsieur de Rueille was biting the handle of his pen, looking at Bijou, and did not appear to hear, he cried:

"Paul, are you there or have you gone out?"

"I am here."

"Ah! good! Then will you do me the kindness to tell me what persons are on the stage?"

"Wait. I am looking."

"What!" said Bijou, "are you obliged to look in order to tell?"

"You don't think, I presume, that I know by heart all the little senseless things that every one chooses to dictate to me?"

•

"But I know them."

And turning to Jean de Blaye she explained:

"There are now on the stage Venus, the Symbolist, Thomas Virelocque, and the Opportunist. We said yesterday that after the presentation of the Symbolist to Venus we would have Madame de Staël come in."

"Well, make her come in at once."

"Have you found any one to take the part of Madame de Staël?" questioned Rueille.

"Up to now no one wanted to act it."

"No," said Bijou. "Not long ago I again asked Madame de Jurzeneourt. She refused positively. That wasn't very nice of her."

"Is Madame de Staël indispensable?" asked Unele Jonzac.

"Quite indispensable," said Bijou with conviction. "We must positively find some way of——"

Then, suddenly enlightened, she cried joyfully:

"Why, Henry can very well act the part of Madame de Staël. He has hardly any mustache."

"I?" said Braeieux, quite taken aback. "I act the part of Madame de Staël?"

"Why, yes. She was rather manly. You will do very well."

"But, great heavens! I don't wish to exhibit myself before people whom I know in a

low-necked gown and a turban, with the figure of a bolster. It would be hideous."

"Not at all. Ah! come, now. You're not going to wait to be urged, I hope?"

"And spoil everything by being ill-natured," added Pierrot with a dignified air.

Henry turned to him and said:

"Ill natured? One can see very well that you are not in my place. But in fact you could very well take my place."

As Pierrot drew back alarmed he continued:

"Why shouldn't you? You have even less mustache than I."

"Yes, but I am a frail little chap," craftily declared Pierrot, "and Madame de Staël was rather a stout woman."

"Frail? You, the athlete?"

Jean de Blaye here struck the inlaid floor with a billiard-eue to command silence, and said:

"We will think of some one else for Madame de Staël when we shall have decided what she has to say. Now she enters. You are not writing, Paul?"

"What do you want me to write?"

"Well, write 'Madame de Staël. She enters at—' Ah! in fact, where does she enter?"

"I have put 'at the back.' When no one tells me anything I always put 'at the back.'"

"Good! Then let us leave 'at the back.'"

“ ‘*Madame de Staël to Thomas Virelocque:*  
I am Madame de Staël.’

“ ‘*Thomas Virelocque:* If you please?’

“ ‘*Madame de Staël:* I am Madame de Staël.’

“ ‘*Venus:* Upon your word.’

“ ‘*The Opportunist:* That is very curious.  
I took you for a Turk.’

“ ‘*The Symbolist:* As for me, I——’”

“ ‘Wait a moment,’ said Monsieur de Rueille.

“ ‘I have made a mistake.’”

“ ‘But how?’”

“ ‘But how?’ Why, as one does make mistakes sometimes. *Parbleu!* I wasn’t thinking.”

“ ‘That is true,’ said Bijou. “ ‘I don’t know what is the matter with you, but you are awfully forgetful this evening.’”

Without answering, Rueille bore his pen so hard down on the paper that it gave out a plaintive cry, and Jean asked:

“ ‘What are you doing now?’”

“ ‘I am scratching out.’”

“ ‘What?’”

“ ‘I have repeated the same lines four times.’”

Bijou and Blaye got up and went and looked at Monsieur de Rueille’s “work,” and the young girl read:

“ ‘*Madame de Staël:* I am Madame de Staël.’

“ ‘ *Thomas Virelocque*: If you please ?’

“ ‘ *Madame de Staël*: I am Madame de Staël.’

“ Yes,” said she, “ you must scratch it out.”

But Jean laughingly objected.

“ Leave it, on the contrary. They will think that Maeterlinck has collaborated. It will be very *chic*.”

“ Suppose we retire,” proposed Monsieur de Jonzac. “ Paul is half-asleep. That is the reason that he writes the same thing over three times without being aware of it. Monsieur l’Abbé is quite asleep; and as to me, I am dying to follow his example.”

“ But,” said Bijou, “ it is hardly one o’clock yet.”

“ Well, but it seems to me that in the country— What do you say about it, Monsieur Giraud ?”

The young professor replied without taking his eyes off of Bijou:

“ Oh, as to me, monsieur, I could stay here all night without being sleepy.”

The marchioness now arose and said:

“ Your uncle is right, my grandchildren. We must go to bed. Bijou, you will see that the books that you have taken out of the library are put back.”

“ Yes, grandmother. I am going to put them back myself.”



They all went out into the hall except Bijou, and Monsieur de Rueille then asked:

“Would you like me to stay with you, Bijou? It won't take so much time.”

“No. You don't know anything about the library, and you will get everything into confusion. I need some one who knows where the books belong.”

And addressing the tutor, who was the last to go out, she said to him very gently, apparently as if she were asking pardon for some great indiscretion:

“Monsieur Giraud, would you be kind enough to help me place the books on the shelves?”

The young man stopped short, too happy to say a word. And as he still stood in the same place, she pointed to the open door.

“Close the door, will you? And now take Molière and I will take Aristophanes. Very well. We will come back for the others.”

While carrying the books she chattered away, appearing not to address her companion, but only to be thinking aloud.

“Why is Jean consulting Aristophanes, when Thomas Virelocque has to speak to Madame de Staël?”

Then she suddenly asked:

“Do you think that our review will be amusing?”

"Why, yes, mademoiselle."

"Why don't you ever say anything? You ought to work too."

"*Mon Dieu!* mademoiselle. I am not very familiar with politics and fashionable gossip. To me they are sealed letters, and I don't very well see——"

"And then you probably prefer to be a simple spectator?"

"I regret, alas! that I cannot even be that."

"What! You are not going to see our review?" she inquired in amazement.

"No, mademoiselle."

"But why?"

He answered, frightfully embarrassed:

"Oh, for a very ridiculous reason."

"What is it?"

"Mademoiselle, I——"

"I beg of you tell me why," said Bijou, and she leaned toward him, graceful and lissome, while the perfume of her hair rose to the young man's face, charming him into a torpor, dreamy and sweet.

"Why do you not care to speak to me?" said she, after awhile. "Am I not your friend—just a little bit?"

"Oh, mademoiselle," he murmured brokenly. "I—I cannot be present on that evening, because—oh, you see, it's very prosaic—because I haven't any coat."

"But you will have plenty of time to send for your coat. Besides, you'll need it for Thursday. We have a dinner on Thursday."

Giraud blushed violently.

"But, mademoiselle, I cannot send for a coat for Thursday or for later on, as I haven't any."

"None at all?"

"None at all."

"Come! You are joking."

"Alas! no, mademoiselle. I have no coat." And he added with a smile that was infinitely sad: "And there are many poor devils like myself who are in the same condition."

"Oh!" said Bijou, suddenly seizing the professor's hand, "let me beg your pardon. How careless and unkind I am! You will be sure to hate me."

"Hate you!" he murmured, lowering his head, "but I adore you—I adore you!"

Bijou regarded him with an air of alarm, but there was a tender expression in her deep eyes veiled in a mist of tears. Then she said with a changed voice:

"Go away! Don't say that any more. Never say it again—never!"

On the door-sill the professor turned back and saw that Bijou was seated on the divan and sobbing, with her face buried in the cushions. He would have liked to go back to her, but did not dare, so turned and left the room without one word.

## IV.

Bijou, who as a rule went trotting about the park and the house every morning, did not appear until after the first stroke of the clock was announcing breakfast. Pierrot anxiously rushed forward to question her before she could even say good-morning to the marchioness and Uncle Alexis. He wanted to know why he hadn't seen her at the dairy as usual, where she went every day to see about the cheeses. Why hadn't she been there, as she didn't go out on horseback?

"How do you know," said Bijou, "that I didn't go out on horseback?"

"Because Patatras was in the stable. I went there to see."

"So you watch all my movements?"

"It isn't exactly watching," said Pierrot, blushing, and beside, I wasn't the only one. There were two of us, Monsieur Giraud——"

"What French! Good heavens! What French!" said Monsieur de Jonezac in despair.

"What's the difference? If there were any one here I should take care to speak more *chiquement*; but as there is no one here but ourselves——"

And turning to Bijou he said:

"It's perfectly true. He was as much surprised as I was—Monsieur Giraud. He kept on saying all the time, 'We always see Mademoiselle Denyse every day running about everywhere. She must be ill.' But then said I, 'Oh, as to that, no. The Bijou is never ill.' Don't you see now, Monsieur Giraud, that I was right?"

"No. You were wrong. I was not exactly ill, but tired—not quite up to the mark. I have just got up."

She walked up to the professor, who was leaning against the embrasure of the window, and holding out her hand continued:

"And I thank Monsieur Giraud for having so kindly thought of me."

Quite pale and evidently worried, the young man hardly ventured to touch the soft little hand which laid itself in his with such confidence and *abandon*, but he seemed pleased with the kind greeting, such as he had certainly never thought to receive again.

"Mademoiselle," he murmured, seized with a vague desire to fly away or to burst into tears, "Pray believe that I never allowed myself to make those remarks."

"Well, then, you were wrong. One must allow one's self everything where 'the Bijou' is concerned—as Pierrot says."

Then all at once she asked, suddenly assuming an air of concern:

"Have they worked on the review this morning?"

"Worked," said Pierrot in an aggrieved tone. "Ah! indeed no! It's bad enough to have to toil away while you are there without doing it in your absence. Oh, no! That would be a hard case, indeed. We had the review for supper, and I above all people—I who am obliged to work besides."

Bijou began to laugh and said:

"Are you not afraid of hurting yourself, working so hard?"

"If he goes on like this," said Monsieur de Jonezac, "he will never get his degree. Am I not right, Monsieur Giraud?"

"I fear so, monsieur, I fear so," answered the professor. "Pierrot is very intelligent, but so careless, so absent-minded, particularly since we came here."

"I am no more absent-minded than you are, Monsieur Giraud!" exclaimed Pierrot, "and that is the truth. Your head seems to be always in the clouds. You're not the book-worm that you were. You never do anything any more except to work with me and over verses in corners."

"Do you write verses, Monsieur Giraud?" inquired Madame de Rueille, who had just come in, followed by Jean and Henry.

"*Mon Dieu !* madame," stammered the poor boy, who did not know which way to turn, "I do write, but it isn't exactly poetry."

"But your verses are charming," said Jean. And as the young man regarded him in astonishment he resumed: "Yes, you write very pretty verses that you sometimes lose. It was little Marcel who found these and gave them to me." And smilingly he offered Giraud a paper folded so that the writing could not be seen.

"Let us see," said Bijou, stretching out her hand.

"Mademoiselle!" cried the tutor, rushing forward in alarm, "Mademoiselle! I beg of you!" Then he added, as if asking pardon for so rude an interruption: "They are very bad verses. Allow me to hide them. I will show you some others which are more worthy of inspection."

Bijou, who was standing in an attitude of eagerness, stretching out her hand with an air of infantile grace, began to entreat him:

"I beg of you, Jean, let me see them. It won't prevent Monsieur Giraud from writing others that we can also see."

But the young man was inflexible, and replied while giving back the papers to the bewildered tutor:

"I cannot show you a letter, for it is a sort

of letter that belongs to the one who wrote it.

"Thank you," murmured Giraud, quite disconcerted. "Thank you, sir." And he slipped the tormenting bit of paper into his pocket.

"Pierrot!" called out the marchioness, "give me 'La Bruyère,' will you?"

"Who did you say?" said the bad boy, winking his eye.

"'La Bruyère!'"

"You can see," said Monsieur de Jonezac, gazing at his son in despair, "that he doesn't even know what La Bruyère is."

Pierrot protested with energy, saying:

"Yes, but I do, though, and I can prove it. It has a blue back."

"A what?" asked the old marchioness.

"A blue back, aunt."

Monsieur Giraud here interposed.

"Explain to your aunt that you have the bad habit of distinguishing books by the color of their binding rather than by their titles."

"*Parbleu!*" said Monsieur de Jonezac indignantly. "He never opens one of them. Such ignorance! When I think that he is nearly seventeen years old!"

"Poor Pierrot!" said Bijou compassionately. "He isn't so ignorant as all that." And as her uncle said nothing in response she added: "And then he is so nice and so healthy."



“Oh! as to that,” replied Monsieur de Jonezac, “he is bursting with health, and that makes him still more unbearable, but not any more intelligent. They are complaining nowadays of intellectual overwork. They say that it makes children stupid, and so they have substituted physical overwork, which makes them more stupid still.”

“Now,” said Bertrode, “uncle has started on the war-path. Well, I am also of his opinion, and it doesn’t please me at all to think that my children will perhaps at some time add to the number of young brutes that we see everywhere about us.”

“But,” said Henry de Bracieux, “there are among the young and the very young many who are very intellectual. I know of some.”

“Well, I also know of some,” answered Jean de Blaye, “but according to my ideas they are not really intellectual. They are——”

As a clock struck a number of times the marchioness arose, saying:

“Come to breakfast, my children. Jean can finish his little explanation at the table.”

Jean replied, laughing:

“I don’t care to, aunt.”

“But I do care. I am no longer ‘up to date,’ as you say, and it doesn’t displease me to be instructed about certain things of which I am in total ignorance.”

seating herself at the table, she continued:

"Now, what about those who are not really intellectual?"

"Oh!" said Jean, "explanations are not in my line. Those who are not truly intellectual are invalids—unreal invalids in the beginning, who end by being actually so. They are unbearably self-conscious, effeminate, and unnatural—everything one can be. Their originality is voluntary and impersonal."

"But what do you mean by that?"

"I can't tell you exactly. They are complicated. For instance, little Balue is a pure type of what I refer to. You can study him."

"That idea never occurred to me. But are there any other extraordinary creatures in the younger generation beside 'complications?'"

"Yes. There are the young athletes."

"As a specimen, Pierrot," said Henry de Bracieux.

The marchioness turned toward her grandson.

"No personalities. Go on with your little lecture, Jean."

"I should prefer, aunt, to eat my egg in peace."

"We had got as far as the young athletes."

"Well, if the 'complications' are rather trying, the athletes are annoying to a degree. Boxing, football, bicycling, matches, and rec-

ords—these are the continual themes of their conversation, and, what is more to be regretted, these subjects assume a gigantic and a unique importance in their lives. In their eyes the man of most consequence is the one who can give the hardest blow of the fist or the one who can show the greatest amount of resistance or strength. The one person in the world who commands their admiration is the ‘champion.’ ”

“And what is the difference between athletes and complications?”

“None; or with rare exceptions that only serve to prove the rule. Understand, I am speaking only of the younger generation, to which Pierrot belongs.”

“Poor Pierrot! Let him alone,” said Bijou. “You are all of you joined against him.”

“Because there is still time to correct his characteristics, whereas if he is allowed to go on, the result certainly will be a most deplorable failure.”

“Jean is right,” affirmed Monsieur de Jonezac. “He can be allowed to give advice to Pierrot, and even to others, as he is intellectual and athletic as well.”

Madame de Bracieux regarded her grand-nephew with benevolence and said:

“Your uncle is right, my boy. You are the distinguished one of the family.” She

observed that Bijou seemed to be examining her cousin curiously, and resumed: "I am only speaking of the men, naturally."

Pierrot leaned over to Denyse, who was seated beside him, and said in a low tone of passionate gratitude:

"It is so good of you to be always defending me, and I care more for you than for all of the others."

She answered smilingly and with an air that was almost maternal:

"But that's very bad of you. You ought to love my uncle, as well as my grandmother, more than you do me."

"Well, you can't prove that; and then that isn't what I wanted to say. What I wished to say was that I love you more than any of them do, and yet there are some of them who care a great deal for you. Now, there is Paul—Paul de Rueille. Well, I am sure that he cares more for you than he does for Bertrade—more than he cares for his boys or for anything else above or below——"

"Stop this minute!" said Bijou in alarm, and looking around to see if any one had overheard.

"Don't worry. They're busy eating; they're not noticing us. What I tell you is perfectly true—and Jean Too, and Henry, and Monsieur Giraud. The Abbé Courteil is the only one who doesn't follow you about, and even——"

"But you are dreaming. How can you imagine——"

"I don't imagine—I observe; and I observe because it annoys me."

Monsieur de Jonezac's *voix* was now heard.

"Why, no. I am convinced that he doesn't even know that Renan exists. He knows nothing—nothing whatsoever."

Ever gentle and conciliating, the professor replied:

"Oh, but yes! For as to Renan, that happens to be precisely a subject with which he ought to be familiar, for three or four days ago I had occasion to quote him as the author of 'The Origin of Language.'"

"Well, I will bet that he doesn't even remember his name." And Monsieur de Jonezac called out—"Pierrot!"

The little one, absorbed in his conversation with Bijou, never suspected that they were discussing him. On hearing himself called he turned his head around, vaguely anxious.

"Pierrot," asked Monsieur de Jonezac, "What is Renan?"

"Come! That's good! The questions are beginning again. Renan! What in the world can that be?"

And as his father repeated, "Don't you know what Renan is?" he answered: "No, papa."

"What!" said Monsieur Giraud in surprise. "Why, it was only the other day we were talking about him."

"About him?" said Pierrot in consternation. "I? I was talking about that man?"

"Why, yes. Come, exercise your memory. I quoted one of his works to you."

Bijou, who had all along been listening with one ear to what Pierrot was saying and following the conversation with the other, remembered, and with her head almost touching her plate and apparently absorbed by the strawberries that she was rolling in the sugar, she whispered to him very low:

"The Origin of Language."

"Come, think hard," repeated the professor. "I quoted from a book of Monsieur Renan's—what was it?"

To the general consternation Pierrot replied resolutely:

"The Language of Flowers.'"

"Admirable!" said Bertrade with delight. "One can always expect something amusing from Pierrot."

Notwithstanding his desire to laugh, Monsieur de Jonezac declared with a frown:

"Well, as to me, I don't find that funny."

With a very red face Pierrot turned to Bijou.

"You, at least—you do not laugh. You are so good."

As they were all leaving the table he drew her out on the terrace stairs, begging her:

“Let me go with you to give the grass to Patatras.”

“But before I do that I must serve the coffee.”

“Bertrade can very well do it for once, don't you see? And as for me, I cannot go back to the drawing-room. They would be sure to ask me the name of something else.”

Denyse took a basket with her in which was placed a box of clover that she gave to her horse every day, and turned in the direction of the stable, followed by Pierrot, who went on repeating, lowering his rough voice till its tones were almost soft and mellow.

“You are so lovely, Bijou—so pretty. If you only knew!”

While crossing the alley which led to the stables he drew her attention to Monsieur de Rueille and Jean de Blaye, who were walking forward and talking, and said:

“See! As you were not there the cousins didn't stay long in the drawing-room.”

Seeing that Denyse was going toward them, he pulled her back roughly, saying:

“No! Please don't, I beg of you. They'll never let go of you, and I shan't have you all to myself. It's such a piece of luck for me to be with you for one moment without Monsieur

Giraud. I always have to go treading on his heels, especially when I am anywhere near you."

Bijou regarded the two men attentively, who, very much absorbed, were walking toward her without seeing her, and between her eyelids shone that little light that at times imparted so singular a sharpness to her habitually veiled glances. She replied, while going into the stable:

"As you please. We will go and give Patastras his grass without them."

Monsieur de Rueille was walking with his eyes fixed on the gravel path of the alley. He raised his head on hearing the door open. Jean de Blaye pointed to the stable and said:

"Look! Is not she the cause of the constraint shown of late in your slightest words—of the sort of animosity that you seem to cherish toward me?"

Affecting a jesting tone, Rueille replied:

"Indeed! Who is it?"

"Bijou, *parbleu!* Ah! Do you think that I haven't noticed every hour what was going on in your mind?"

"It must have been very interesting."

"Don't joke about it! You know that you don't feel like doing so. I knew the very moment when you begun unconsciously to admire Bijou. More than one admires a good little



cousin whom one likes very much. It was on the evening of the *grand prix*, at Uncle Alexis' house, when she sang. You don't say anything!"

"I am listening. Go on."

"Since we have all been together here, seeing each other constantly—since you have been passing every moment of long days beside Bijou, your—let us say your admiration has naturally increased, and since yesterday, after your drive to Pont-ser-Loire, it has reached the culminating point. Isn't it true?"

"Well, yes, it is true."

"That doesn't surprise me. But explain one thing to me—something that does surprise me."

"What do you mean?"

"Why is it that you seem to be so particularly vexed with me? Why with me any more than with your brother-in-law, with Pierrot's tutor, or even with Pierrot himself?"

"*Dame!* Henry is almost of the same age as Bijou. He has been brought up with her, and she looks upon him exactly as if he were a brother. Little La Balue is ridiculous, the tutor a poor devil who doesn't count, and Pierrot a callow youth; whereas you —"

"Whereas I——"

"As to you, you are one of those people with whom one falls in love, and you know it

very well; and I see, I feel, I divine that it is you whom Bijou will end by falling in love with."

"With me? Come, now! She doesn't even deign to pay the slightest attention to me. In her eyes I am only the man who breaks in a horse for her, takes her out rowing, or writes verses for her review."

"Nevertheless you are of more importance than the others."

"And why then? You are pleased to consider little Balue as 'ridiculous,' but everybody is not of your opinion. As to Giraud, he is charming."

"Yes, but he is Giraud."

"And even so, what difference does that make?"

"A great deal—that is to say, none at all to certain women; but Bijou is not one of that kind."

"Ah! And what do you know about it?"

"I have been studying her for a long time without appearing to do so."

"You have been studying her, but you don't understand her."

"Possibly."

"I am sure that if I were in her place, among so many lovers the one whom I should choose——"

"Those are the words of a song in the '*Noces de Jeannette*.'"

"You are not going to prevent me from following out my little idea. Now, among so many lovers, if I had to make a choice, Giraud is the one to whom I most certainly would give the preference."

"A woman would choose Giraud because he is a handsome youth, but a young girl who regards a man simply from a marriageable point of view would never give him the preference."

"Then the reason that you are not angry with Giraud is because, according to your idea, he isn't marriageable, consequently not to be greatly dreaded?"

"Precisely."

"Well, and as to me, my poor old man—do you then look upon me as marriageable? Just picture me with my unfortunate 400,000 francs trying to make Bijou happy. Fancy us in an apartment that rents for 3,000, with pretroleum lamps and a charcoal fire. It would be simply delicious!"

"And you think, then, that you are in love with her?"

"Permit me. I have never said that I was in love with Bijou. I don't know whether I am or not."

"And you think that she is not in love with you?"

"Not the least in the world. Besides that,

she has never even tried to make me think so. 'Good-morning.' 'Good-evening.' 'It's a fine day.' Such is the nature of the exciting dialogues that each day take place between us. So, you see, you are wrong to be vexed with me."

"I beg your pardon, my poor Jean, but I was so sure that you were the favored one that——"

Monsieur de Rueille here interrupted himself, leaning forward to listen.

"Look!" said he. "There she is!"

Bijou was leaving the stable, still followed by Pierrot. She walked up gracefully to the two men, examining them with her usual calm and smiling air, and asked:

"What is the matter with you two? You look as if you were discussing matters of the very greatest importance."

## V.

Bijou was in the dining-room arranging the baskets of flowers for dinner, while in the butler's pantry the servants were polishing the large silver dishes, which shone resplendently, when the butler said to one of the footmen:

"Slip on your coat. Here's a carriage, and coming slowly up the avenue. Oh, you've got time enough. It's quite far off."

Looking out of the window, the footman asked:

"Whose carriage is that? I don't know it at all. Splendid harness, all the same."

"It is probably the gentleman from La Norinière—Monsieur le Comte de Clagney."

"*Mâtin!* It's well turned out."

"Oh, he has enough for that."

"What! Has he a large income?"

"Awfully large—about four hundred thousand."

"You know him, then?"

"My wife was a kitchen-maid in his house before I married her. A good master—always amiable and nothing mean about him. But you'd better start if you wish to get to the door before he does."

A moment before, Bijou, who wanted some more flowers, had run out and, making one leap across the road, had jumped into the middle of a large bed of roses, where she was making pitiful inroads. She was so absorbed that she did not hear a carriage that turned into the road encircling the lawn, nor even when it stopped before the door of entrance. When at last she raised her head, she saw a tall man standing two or three steps from her and regarding her with ecstasy. And in truth Bijou, in her cotton gown with broad pink stripes and her little baby apron trimmed with valenciennes, was really a pretty sight, foraging with rounded arms among the flowers. When she saw herself regarded thus, her tea-rose skin took on a livelier tint, while she stood speechless and embarrassed before the gentleman, who continued to contemplate her without saying a word.

He was a man of fifty-five to sixty, tall, slender, distinguished, although rather frail in figure. His fine and intelligent face had a somewhat sad expression. As Bijou, still immovable, seemed hesitating and anxious, he approached and, bowing, said in a very sweet tone:

“Mademoiselle, pardon me, but are you not Denyse de Courtaix?”

Bijou looked straight into the eyes so curiously fixed upon her and replied, all smiles:

"Yes; and you—you are Monsieur de Clagny, are you not?"

"How did you know it?"

Denyse had just jumped from the flower-bed into the road, and said, in happy, joyous tones, without directly answering the question:

"Oh! how pleased grandmother will be to see you, monsieur; and Uncle Alexis, too. Ever since it was known that you were coming back here to live in the country they speak of no one but you. Let us go and see grandmother at once."

She ran on before him, a graceful, undulating figure, crossing the large rooms with the gliding step that was one of her greatest charms. The marchioness was not in the drawing-room, although she was usually to be found there. Bijou rang and gave orders to tell her. Then she came and sat down opposite Monsieur de Clagny, and examining him with attention observed:

"Paul de Rueille was quite right when he said that I must have seen you formerly, for I do remember you."

She gazed at him still more earnestly and repeated pensively:

"I remember you very well."

"As to myself, I confess," said he, "that had I met you anywhere except at Bracioux I should not have recognized you. You have

grown so and are so much improved that with the exception of the beautiful forget-me-not eyes, which have not changed, nothing remains of the baby of former days."

"The name that you gave her remains."

"The name?" asked he in surprise. "What name?"

"Bijou. Don't you remember? It appears that it was you who gave it to me."

"That is true. You used to seem such a fragile little thing to me, so rare and amiable—a little jewel, in fact—an exquisite jewel. So they have continued to call you by that name? It certainly suits you wonderfully."

"I don't think so. I fear that it may seem somewhat absurd to be called Bijou at twenty-one—for I am twenty-one, monsieur."

"Is it possible?"

"Quite possible. In four years I shall dress Saint Catherine's hair."

The count gazed at Bijou with an admiration that he did not seek to disguise, and answered with conviction:

"You! Ah! no, indeed! *Par exemple!*"

Madame de Bracieux now entered with her hands extended, and with a look of joy exclaimed:

"Oh! how glad I am to see you!"

As Denyse made a movement to leave the room she retained her, saying to Clagny, who still seemed lost in admiration:



"I see that Bijou hasn't waited to be introduced. Tell me what you think of my granddaughter. And without giving him time to answer she resumed quickly: "And she is really the same little jewel that you used to admire."

"Mademoiselle Denyse is enchanting."

"Denyse—whom you will do me the kindness not to call 'mademoiselle'—is a good little girl, devoted and obedient, whose gayety brightens up my old house, so sad before her coming."

"How does it happen that I have never seen Mademoiselle Denyse——"

"Mademoiselle again!" interrupted the marchioness.

"That I haven't seen 'Bijou' in Paris? I go to see you so regularly on your day."

"Yes, but you always come early, at a time when she isn't there; and as you haven't cared to dine with us for sixteen years——"

"I dine nowhere, as you well know. But you have never spoken to me of Bijou—never given me any news of her."

"Because you never asked me for any."

"I had forgotten her—this little creature whom I had hardly seen; and still, just now, on seeing a delicious young girl emerge from a parterre of flowers, I knew her at once. Isn't it so, mademoiselle?" Recovering himself, he said laughingly: "Isn't it so, Bijou?"

"It is true. Monsieur de Clagny asked me at once if I were not Denyse de Courtaix, but I also knew at once who he was. I have heard him so much spoken of that I have seen him in my dreams, and it seems very odd——"

She stepped, and with a long look at the count added:

"I have seen him in my dreams exactly as he is."

"A very old man," said Clagny gently and rather sadly.

"No, a very handsome man," said Bijou with sincerity, then added quickly: "And Uncle Alexis isn't here yet. There seems to be no good in pulling the bell with all one's might—he doesn't come so. I am going to look for him."

She was running out, when the marchioness called her back, saying:

"Wait a moment! Tell them to set another place. You will dine with us, Clagny?"

"Yes, if there is no one here."

"But some people are coming—friends of yours."

"I am a regular old bear who never dines with his friends; and besides, in this suit——"

"Your suit is good enough, and then there will be plenty of time to send to Norinière for your coat if you care to."

"I do care to—if I stay."

Bijou went up to him and coaxingly said:

"You will stay. And do you know what would be very very nice of you? It would be for you to stay just as you are—without the coat."

"But why, if it annoys him to stay without changing his suit, do you insist, Bijou?" asked the marchioness.

"Because, grandmother, if Monsieur de Clagny doesn't dress for dinner Monsieur Giraud will be able to dine with us also, while otherwise he will have to dine alone in his room."

"What is that you are talking about?"

"It is very simple. Monsieur Giraud has no dress-coat—not a single one. I learned it by chance. He just now said to Baptiste that he was ill and would not leave his room this evening. Then if Monsieur de Clagny would stay just as he is—you understand—he could also."

"Come! You are a good Bijou," said Madame de Bracieux with emotion. "You think of everybody. You are always engaged in giving pleasure to some one."

Denyse was not listening; she was awaiting the count's consent. At last he asked:

"Would it give you a great deal of pleasure to have Monsieur Giraud dine at the table?"

"Yes."

"Well, it shall be as you wish. Now tell me: who is this gentleman whom I do not know and for whose sake I consent to appear as an ill-bred man?"

"He is Pierrot's tutor."

"Ah! And who is Pierrot?"

"The son of Alexis," said Madame de Bracieux, laughing.

"Then the god to whom I am to be sacrificed is Monsieur Giraud, tutor to Pierrot de Jonezac and honored by the protection of Mademoiselle Bijou? Thank you very much. I like to understand my position."

"But," said Denyse, who had grown very red—"but I am not protecting Monsieur Giraud at all. I——"

"You needn't defend yourself. I can understand the part a poor tutor who has no coat has to play in the life of a pretty little lady like yourself. It is a part of sacrifice—he represents exactly what is called 'a walking gentleman.'"

"You have no idea," said the marchioness as soon as Denyse had gone out, "how perfectly lovely that child is. This boy in whom she interests herself and who is really charming is treated by her exactly on the same footing as the most distinguished men—those who are considered the very smartest. Bijou is a pearl. You will see that for yourself."

"I shall see it perhaps too well."

"How too well?"

"Ah, yes! I am perfectly incorrigible, as you know. I have a stupid old heart which starts off on the slightest provocation, and then I lose all control of it."

"But Bijou is my granddaughter, my poor friend."

"Well, what does that prove?"

"It proves that she might also be your own."

"I am aware of that; but all this is only reasoning, and young hearts reason but little, or badly."

"And then?"

"Why, then," said Monsieur de Clagny with a forced laugh, "I was joking, naturally."

Bijou had crossed the court of honor. The heat was very great. The peacocks, standing on the trunk of a fallen tree, looked stupid and absurd; the dogs, stretched out on their sides, were panting under the ardent rays of the sun, without, however, seeking the shade. No one was out at this torrid hour except Pierrot, who, in a suit of white duck and with a large straw hat on his head, was walking in the shade of some chestnut trees. Denyse ran up the stairs and rushed into the schoolroom like a whirlwind, but stopped short at the

door with an air of embarrassment. Monsieur Giraud, who was seated at a table, got up quickly on seeing her. She murmured:

“Oh! I beg your pardon. I was looking for Pierrot. I thought that he was here and that you were taking your walk.”

Quite disconcerted, the young professor replied, searching for words and finding none:

“No, mademoiselle! No. I am here. It is Pierrot, on the contrary, who has gone out, but—if you would like—if I could tell him that—for—you have probably something to say to him.”

He completely lost his head on seeing her so pretty, with her skin so delicately pink, notwithstanding the terrible heat, and her great changing eyes gently fixed upon him. With some embarrassment she said:

“Yes, certainly, I wanted to speak to Pierrot, but only to him. Although what I had to say was something that concerns you. It would be better——”

Giraud interrupted her with an air of anxiety.

“Which concerns me. But, really, I don’t understand—I wonder if——”

The idea came to him that perhaps she was going to tell him that after what had passed on the night before last he could not stay at Bracieux any longer. And he was almost dis-

tracted in thinking that he must not only leave Bijou, but also be without a position for two months, when he had thought he was safely and happily settled for that period.

The young girl regarded him with a kind smile and at last replied:

“Because it is rather a hard thing to say to—the one who is interested.”

“But, then, Pierrot——”

“Oh! Pierrot, who is not, I am aware, a skillful diplomat, would nevertheless have known how to tell you better than I.”

“To tell me?”

“That you are to dine with us this evening. A headache, don't you see, is only a good excuse for women, and you will not be the only one without a dress-coat, as Monsieur de Clagny will have on the suit he has worn to pay us a visit in; so you understand——”

“But, mademoiselle, without even considering the trial it would be to me not to be dressed like the others, it would certainly be a piece of rudeness to your guests.”

“Yes, you are perhaps right. It would seem rude if you were the only one not in evening dress, but there will be Monsieur de Clagny, in the same suit he has worn to pay us a visit in; so you understand——”

“Mademoiselle, Monsieur de Clagny, whom I saw on his arrival, is an old man, and as

such he can be allowed many things that I—particularly in my position—I could not.”

“You? You will obey my grandmother like a good little child, for it was grandmother who sent me.”

“Ah!” murmured the young man with a look of disappointment. “So it was your grandmother. I had hoped that it was you who—— But you must be vexed with me, that is true.”

“Vexed with you! But why?” she asked in surprise.

“But—because—you know well—the other evening, when, in spite of myself, I——”

Bijou’s gay face grew grave and she said quite seriously :

“I thought that was something never to be mentioned again. I wish you to forget what you have said.” She stood perfectly still for a second in a pensive attitude, and then added in a faint voice: “Above all, I wish to forget it myself.”

Her eyelids were covered, the lashes rising and falling with a rapid motion and throwing fantastic shadows on the rosy cheeks suffused with light. Giraud walked up to her, anxious and excited, and in a low murmur, tender as a caress, he asked:

“Is it true what you have just said? Do you still remember that moment—when I was mad? Can you think of it without anger?”



She answered, fixing her beautiful blue eyes full upon him:

“Yes, I can think of it without anger.” And then, so low that he could hardly hear her, she murmured: “And I am always thinking of it.” Then with a sudden change of expression she added: “But you are to forget it now—forget at once what I ought never to have said to you. I pray you to do it for my sake.”

“Forget it! How can you think that I can forget it? You know very well that it is impossible!”

“Still you must,” she insisted. “Yes, you must say to yourself that you have—that we have both had a dream, a very sweet and brilliant dream; one of those from which one awakens happy and exalted, to a certain extent, by a vision of beautiful things that have suddenly vanished in air—impossible to describe. Have you never had such dreams? One cannot, no matter how one tries, remember them, and still one loves them.”

The caressing tones of her voice greatly disturbed the young man. He had sat down again, mechanically, without answering, and with his face raised toward Bijou he burst into tears.

She approached him and said compassionately:

"Are you crying. If you only knew how it grieves me to see you cry!"

And then almost harshly she continued:

"And if it is any consolation I can tell you that I also am unhappy."

Overcome with delight, he asked:

"Is it possible?"

Denyse did not reply. She had just perceived a letter on the table that Giraud was finishing as she came into the room.

"I was writing to my brother," said he, in response to her glance, "and instead of telling him about my pupil, my occupations, and subjects to which I ought to have confined myself, I wrote of no one but yourself."

Placing her rosy finger on the signature, she replied:

"I was looking at your name. Fred! It is a name I love. I have given it to my godson, Bertrade's youngest child."

She seemed to be gazing afar through the open window while she repeated softly: "Fred!" Then suddenly pressing her slender hand to her forehead she said:

"And the dinner! and my baskets! and the *menus*, which are not even written! and it is five o'clock!"

And as the poor boy remained there, half-stunned and without moving, she asked:

"It is understood, then, about this evening, isn't it? I shall order another place to be set."

Vaguely recalled to his senses, he replied:

"Among all those dress-coats I shall produce a disagreeable effect."

"Why, no, not at all. And besides, there will be plenty of other coats. In the first place, there is Monsieur de Clagny in a frock-coat, and then Monsieur de Bermès, who, fearing he may meet General de Burfleus, is always in uniform. Monsieur l'Abbé will be in his cassock. And she concluded, laughing: "That makes three already who will not be in dress-coats."

As she was leaving the schoolroom she ran against Henry de Bracieux, who was coming toward her, in the corridor. He asked in surprise:

"Come! what are you doing here?"

"And you?"

"I—I was going back to my room."

"Well, I was just leaving Pierrot's."

"Pierrot is in the garden."

"I didn't know that, and I had something to say to him."

He asked suspiciously and almost aggressively:

"To him or to Monsieur Giraud?"

Without appearing to remark her cousin's singular manner, she replied gently:

"To him, so that he could repeat it to Monsieur Giraud; and as he wasn't there——"

"Then it was Giraud to whom you——"

"Gave grandmother's message—yes." With an innocent air she added: "Now, why does it interest you so much to know to which one of them I gave the message?"

He replied in a jesting tone, but with some embarrassment;

"Because I am curious, probably; and to prove that I am curious I should like to know what the message was."

"Grandmother bade me tell Monsieur Giraud, who hasn't any dress-coat——"

"Giraud has no dress-coat?"

"No."

"Not any at all?"

"There! You are saying exactly what I did. No, not any kind of a dress-coat. He had sent word that he would not dine with us, then, as Monsieur de Clagny is staying to dinner, and as he is in a frock-coat I went to inform Pierrot, so that he could tell Monsieur Giraud. Do you understand?"

"Yes," said Henry, "very well. But Jean, who is so smart and never travels without a lot of coats—he must have at least three here—he can very well lend him one. They are of exactly the same height."

"That would be nice."

"Oh, nothing would please him better. Giraud is a charming fellow whom we would all like if——"

He stopped short and Bijou asked:

“If what?”

“Nothing. I’ll go and arrange this affair. At Father Clagny’s age it is of no consequence how one is dressed; but at Giraud’s age it is quite different. I am sure that he would suffer greatly in thinking that he was appearing in a bad light, particularly——”

“Particularly——”

“Particularly before you.”

Bijou shrugged her shoulders and ran off down the long corridor.

## VI.

ALTHOUGH she had superintended the arrangement of the table, the flowers, and the *menus*, Bijou was ready before any of the others.

Carrying an enormous basket of flowers in her arms, she entered the drawing-room just as the marchioness was leaving it to go to her room and dress.

She was so occupied in arranging her flowers on a *console* that she did not see Monsieur de Clagny, who was regarding her earnestly as she went backward and forward with the pretty movements of a bird fluttering about before it alights. Finally he spoke, and his voice startled Denyse:

“Surely that pretty gown must have come direct from Paris?”

“Ah!” said Bijou in confusion. “You gave me such a fright.” Then, coming up to the count and lightly patting her gown of vaporous pale pink gauze, she answered: “This pretty frock did not come from Paris. It was manufactured at Bracieux, near Pont-dur-Loire.”

Truly surprised, the count exclaimed:

"Oh! really! and by whom?"

"By Denyse, at your service, and by an old seamstress and occasional theatrical dresser."

He had arisen and was now walking slowly around her, surveying her with an air almost of timid admiration. She was so pretty, emerging from the rosy vapor that hardly seemed to touch her wonderful little body and from which arose her shoulders, tinted as well with a singular pinkish luster and imparting so original an effect to her downy and delicate skin. And Clagny thought Bijou not only bewitchingly pretty, but wonderfully captivating with her tempting mouth and innocent eyes. And while he was examining her curiously, Bijou was saying to herself that grandmother's old friend was much younger than she had thought.

He was a tall and still slender man, really good-looking, with his hair very white on the temples and his blond mustache as yet hardly gray. His brown eyes had a sweet expression, and his somewhat supercilious mouth when he smiled revealed very white and pointed teeth, exactly like those of a young dog, and which lit up his whole face in a remarkable manner.

The silence became embarrassing, and at last Bijou said:

"Hasn't grandmother come down yet? I thought I should find her here."

"She left to go and dress the moment before you came in."

"She will never be ready."

Monsieur de Clagny looked at his watch.

"But dinner is at eight o'clock. She has plenty of time. It isn't half-past seven yet."

"Oh," said Denyse with regret, "if I had known that I wouldn't have hurried so much. I have such a horror of being late."

"Well, I for one am pleased that you did hurry. I shall now be able to talk with you for one little moment."

Laughingly she said:

"For a good half-hour, at least; for here no one is ever before the time—never, and the guests are no more in advance than the people in the house."

"Oh! And about the guests—tell now with whom I am going to dine. Your grandmother said, 'You will dine with some old friends of yours.' Now, of friends I should not have many, as it is twelve years since I have been in the country and the inhabitants have probably changed."

"Not as much as all that. Let us see. You will dine with the Tourvilles——"

"The Tourvilles? Aren't they dead yet?"

"Those with whom you are going to dine are living. They had some relations who are now dead."



“Ah! *A la bonne heure!* Then little Tourville is married?”

“Two years ago.”

“He was quite ugly. Did he make a good marriage?”

“That depends. He married Mademoiselle Chaillot, a young lady of the Bourse.”

“What, a young lady of the Bourse?”

“Yes. Her father works in the Bourse. I believe he is very, very rich.”

“Is he Chaillot, the banker?”

“Very likely. I never inquired. They have restored Tourville—it is superb; and they entertain constantly.”

“Is Madame de Tourville pretty?”

“You will see. She is very amiable and very intelligent, they say. As to me, I never perceived it.”

And as Monsieur de Clagny smiled she added quickly:

“Because I know her so slightly.”

“And besides the Tourvilles who else is there?” he questioned.

“Monsieur de Bernès——”

“Little Hubert, the dragoon?”

“The same.”

“He is the son of some good friends of mine, and as nice as can be. Don't you think so?”

“Think what?”

"That Hubert de Bernès is nice?"

"Oh, I know him so slightly. He always seemed to me—how can I express it?—colorless; yes, colorless."

"Because you frighten him, probably. I can understand how that might be."

Laughingly she said:

"Perhaps I intimidate you?"

Very seriously he replied:

"A great deal."

"Oh!" cried she in surprise, "is it possible?"

"It is very possible and it is true. So if you can intimidate an old man like me it isn't surprising that you should intimidate little Hubert."

"Little Hubert! Why, he is six feet tall."

"Yes, but he is only twenty-six years old, and to me he will always be little Hubert. In any case, you will at least agree that he is a handsome fellow?"

"I don't know."

"Do you mean to tell me that you have never looked at him?"

"I have looked at him, but as far as Monsieur de Bernès is concerned I am a very poor judge."

"And why?"

"Because I detest very young men."

"At twenty-six one is no longer a very young man."



*"I am going to accompany myself on the guitar."*

CHAP. VII.



"That may be; but at that age they do not exist for me."

"Ah, indeed! And at what age do they begin to exist for you?"

She began to laugh.

"Very late."

Then changing her tone:

"I am glad that you know Monsieur de Bernès, for then, at least, you will not be too greatly bored this evening."

"Ah! It appears, then, that I mustn't depend upon the other guests to amuse me?"

"Oh, no. The others—there are first the La Balues."

"Goodness! They are terrifying. And their children? They ought to be growing up by this time."

"They have even stopped. Louis is twenty-three and Gisèle twenty-two."

"What are they like?"

"He poses, to the disgust of everybody. He is never hungry or thirsty or sleepy any more. He likes nothing, everything annoys him, and it isn't true, you know. He never misses a ball, and his sister tells how he gets up in the night and eats when no one sees him. And then he writes ridiculous poetry, paints pictures as absurd as his verses, and music—oh! what music!"

"And the girl?"

"She is as masculine as her brother is effeminate. Goes stag-hunting and dreams of having a complete equipment, and that she can dispatch the stag herself, and also dreams of marrying an officer."

"She must be interested in Hubert."

"Who do you mean by Hubert?"

"Littles Bernès."

"Oh, no. I don't think so. In any case, he isn't in the least interested in her."

"Because he is interested in you, like all the others. Isn't it so?"

"Not the least in the world."

"Monsieur de Clagny shrugged his shoulders and exclaimed:

"Come, now! it is perfectly clear to me."

"There are now only three remaining guests for me to present to you," resumed Bijou, evidently seeking to change the conversation: "The Juzencourts, and they are bringing a friend who has come to pass a month with them. A delightful little widow, the Viscountess of Neizel."

"What!" said the count, with a sudden gesture, "Madame de Neizel? Jean de Blaye is then here?"

Denyse opened her beautiful clear eyes to the fullest extent, and answered in surprise:

"Yes, Jean is here, but—what connection is there?"

"Not any! Not any!" quickly asserted M. de Clagny, and after a moment's silence he asked:

"Is she still pretty? Madame de Neizel."

"Very pretty."

"As pretty as you?"

Bijou smiled.

"Why do you make fun of me? I know very well that I am not pretty."

"It is now my turn, my dear little Bijou, to ask you why you make fun of an old friend who admires you with all his heart, and who is not the only one, alas!"

"Why alas?"

"Because when one admires, or when one loves, one would like to be the only one to love and admire; friendship is selfish and jealous."

With a merry smile she asked:

"And since—let us see!—how long?—three hours—since the last three hours when our acquaintance began you have already formed a friendship for me?"

M. de Clagny answered seriously, and almost with emotion:

"A very great one!"

"So much the better, because, don't you see? I also like you very much, oh! very, very much!"

And as if speaking to herself, she added:

"I had formed such a different idea of you

—I had expected to see quite another sort of person."

"A younger man?" he said sadly.

"On the contrary. They had represented you as a friend of my grandfather. Grandmother always spoke of you 'as my old friend Clagny.' And so, you understand, when I saw you I received a shock."

"Why?"

"Because you gave me the effect of being—I can't say exactly how old—but about forty-five; in fact, about the age of Paul de Rueille. I then—— You are very handsome, and I think a great deal of good looks."

"Your cousin De Blaye is a good-looking man."

She appeared to reflect for a moment:

"Jean? Is he so very handsome? He doesn't give me that effect. And besides, you know, when one lives in the same house, one ends by never seeing each other."

"I am very sure that he sees you."

"Oh, no. People don't look at me as much as you think. They like me because I was left all alone in the world at seventeen. And then, when grandmother took me, like a poor little stray dog, and gave me a home with her, they all interested themselves in me, and gave me a kind welcome. I have become the Bijou whom they have brought up and whom they



spoil, whose faults they overlook, and who always has her own way."

"And there the Bijou is right. The only pleasure in life is to have one's own way when one can."

"One always can," she said, apparently without being conscious that she was speaking.

Then running to the bay window, she cried:

"Come, this is nice. Here are the Tourvilles, and grandmother isn't down yet."

She ran forward to meet a lady who was advancing, frightfully overdressed, and who was followed by a common-looking man, with an air of affected dignity and extremely snob-bish appearance.

Bijou introduced the Count de Clagny to the Count de Tourville. Then as the countess entered, still beautiful in the cloud of lace that enveloped her, she returned to talk with M. de Clagny.

"Well," said she, "what do you think of the Tourvilles?"

"I don't like them. But I find Henry de Bracieux greatly improved. He is not quite as good-looking as his cousin yet, but he may be, perhaps."

"As good-looking as what cousin?"

"Why, Blaye."

"Again! Ah, really. You seem to think a great deal of Jean's beauty."

"*Mon Dieu!* Beauty is perhaps not exactly the word, but he is charming, you will admit."

"I will admit that."

"That reminds me. Tell me, now, who is that very nice-looking young fellow whom I met a little while ago at the end of the avenue?"

"Dear me! I don't know! Unless it were Pierrot's tutor. But, he is not so very nice-looking as you seem to think."

M. de Clagny motioned with his hand toward the door and said:

"There he is."

"Ah!" said Bijou in surprise, "can it be?"

She was amazed, both at the admiration expressed by the count, and by the transformation wrought by Jean's coat. In this well-cut garment, which was wonderfully becoming to him, the young professor appeared thoroughly at his ease, and almost distinguished. And Henry, approaching Denysé, asked, pointing to Giraud:

"*Hein!* Wasn't that a fine idea of mine? No, but did you ever see such a difference?"

And as she did not answer soon enough to snit him, he added:

"I'll bet that you don't. Women never observe that sort of thing where men are concerned."

The guests were all arriving. First the La Balues, imperturbable and absurd enough to

excite involuntary derision, each one equally ridiculous in his own particular style, but so happy and self satisfied, that it would really have been a pity to undeceive them.

Then Hubert de Bernès, who came, as Bijou had predicted, in uniform, and who was gazing searchingly all around the room, as if passing the guests in review. The Juzencourts were the last to come, bringing with them Madame de Neizel, a very pretty woman, of a supple and delicate beauty, with the languorous grace of a creole, a complexion of jasmine, and heavy silken hair, intensely black of hue.

Bijou, who was regarding her curiously, as if she had never seen her before, said to Monsieur de Clagny:

“Madame de Neizel is really very pretty.”

“Bijou,” the marchioness called out, “Madame de Juzencourt wants to see the children. Go and get them. With your permission, Bertrade, and with yours also, Monsieur l’Abbé.”

Monsieur de Clagny made a gesture of annoyance on being thus separated from Denyse. It already seemed to him as if he could no longer get on without her. She came back very quickly, followed by Marcel and Robert, and leading by the hand a superb baby of four years, with an amiable and confiding smile.

“Here is my godson,” said she proudly. “Isn’t he sweet, and beautiful, and good. He’s a perfect love!”

"She is so nice to that child," said Madame de Rueille; "she is always doing something for him. It was she who taught him how to read."

"Already!" said Monsieur de Clagny, in a tone of reproach, "they have taught him to read already?"

"Bijou teaches him many other things, don't you, Bijou?" asked the marchioness. "It appears you are now instructing your pupil in sacred history; for, two days ago, he told me all about Moses; he knew it all very well."

"Ah! *par exemple*," said the count in a teasing tone; "I should like to hear it. Go on, unfortunate infant."

Graceful and tender, Bijou knelt down before the baby, but on hearing them speak about telling his "story," the poor little boy turned toward her with an imploring face.

"Tell it, Fred," said she.

Submissive, but discontented, the little one raised his eyes to his godmother's face.

"Tell about Moses—you know it perfectly."

"Well," said Fred, in a resolute tone. "They put little Moses in a little basket, and they put the little basket in the Nile."

He paused, his forehead bathed in perspiration, but Bijou said:

"And then what happened?"

"Don't know," said the little one shortly;

“don't know any more—don't know any more, I tell you. You tell what happened.”

“Come, come, aren't you going on?” said Bijou.

“Please don't make me,” he begged.

But Bijou insisted:

“Yes, but you must. Something happened while Moses was on the Nile. What was it? What was it that happened?”

He thought for a moment, frowning with closed eyes, and just as they had given up all hopes of hearing, he cried, delighted with his discovery:

“It was ‘Puss in Boots’ who came, and who cried: ‘Help! the Marquis of Carabas is drowning!’”

“There!” said Bertrade, laughing; “this is the result of teaching so many fine things at the same time.”

And Monsieur de Rueille added:

“Two days ago Denyse gave him the marvelous ‘Puss in Boots’ that we brought from Pont-sur-Louise, and which has done Moses such great injustice.”

Bijou turned toward her cousin and asked, with a surprised air:

“Denyse! Since when have you called me Denyse?”

“Why,” replied Rueille, “I don't know; it sometimes happens.”

"Never. So I thought that you were angry."

Then stooping down to her godson, she took him in her arms and said, while laughing:

"My poor little Fred! we haven't either of us been much of a success."

Giraud, who was at this moment standing behind her, regarded her with admiration. She pressed the child, who was smiling upon her, closer to her and murmured in a caressing voice:

"Fred, my darling Fred, I love you so much; if you only knew——"

On hearing his name pronounced with such tenderness the young professor had trembled from head to foot, and with great difficulty had restrained the impulse that impelled him toward Denyse. And he had grown so pale, his face was so strangely drawn, that Pierrot, who was not very observant or particularly penetrating where Bijou was not concerned, asked:

"What is the matter with you, Monsieur Giraud? How odd you look! Are you ill?"

Denyse turned quickly around and asked with interest:

"Are you ill, Monsieur Giraud?"

"I? Why, not at all, mademoiselle. I don't know where Pierrot got such an idea."

"*Dame!*" said the perverse boy, unconvinced, "just look at yourself—such a sight as

you are. Besides, you haven't been up to the mark for the last three or four days. You must have something the matter with you that you don't know anything about."

"I assure you," murmured the unfortunate youth in torment, "I assure you that there is nothing whatsoever the matter with me."

Monsieur de Clagny had drawn near, he regarded little Fred (whose head was on Bijou's shoulder) with envy and said:

"Your godson is superb!"

[ "Yes, isn't he? And he adores me!"

As they were announcing dinner, she gave the baby who was already asleep to the English nurse, who had come in meanwhile. Standing before her, with a disagreeable expression, little La Balue was offering the acute angle of his arm. She placed her hand in it with difficulty, and, resigned to her fate, seated herself at the table, between her cavalier and Monsieur Giraud. Giraud, mad with joy, on finding himself near her, became more awkward and embarrassed than ever. His timidity, already great, increased with the violence of his admiration. He literally did not dare to say a word, and was in despair, feeling that he appeared absurd. He was not only in love with Denyse, with her beauty, her grace, and her wonderful charm, but he worshipped her, too, for her goodness of heart, which appeared to him now to be infinite.

He had one day murmured evasive words of love to a daughter of the principal of a school, where he was a master, and he remembered, not without fear, the angry contempt with which the young *bourgeoise* had reproached him, for daring to lift his eyes to her.

And now he had told this rich and beautiful daughter of a great house, frankly and crudely, that he adored her, and her answer had been given only in sweet and affectionate words, that discouraged without wounding him, and then he grew sad over himself, knowing well that his life, crossed by this impossible love, would be forever marred.

How could he hope, after having known and loved a woman like Mademoiselle de Courtaix, that he should ever be able to care for any woman whom his position would entitle him to marry?

And the poor boy, who, up to three weeks ago, had sometimes dreamed of a snug apartment, presided over by a little woman, fresh, unassuming and modest, now saw himself forever condemned to the miserable furnished room, where he would some day perish, surrounded by photographs of Bijou, wrested with infinite pains from his pupil Pierrot.

At the beginning of the dinner, Denyse spoke but little. Her glances wandered about the table, and discovered a thousand trifles, so



amusing to those who can detect them. Madame de Bracieux had at her right Madame de Balue, whom she somewhat neglected for her old friend Clagny, placed at her left and with whom she kept up a ceaseless flow of conversation. Monsieur de Jonezac, seated opposite his sister, between Madame de la Balue, and Madame de Tourville, seemed to be but slightly amused, no more in fact than Madame de Neizel, who, with a rather sad look, did not interest herself very much in her neighbors Henry de Bracieux and Monsieur de Rueille, and often glanced in the direction of Jean de Blaye, who was seated at the other end of the table between Madame de Juzencourt and Mademoiselle de la Balue. He appeared to be paying no attention at all to Madame de Neizel, and many times Bijou's eyes encountered his. As if this meeting had annoyed her, she turned toward little La Balue, and, suddenly growing amiable, began to talk with animation. Then Jean's somewhat anxious glance rested full upon her, and there remained.

## VII.

AFTER dinner in the drawing-room, as the heat was overpowering, Madame de Bracieux said:

"Those who are not afraid of the evening dew, you know, can go out on the terrace, or in the garden."

Gisèle de la Balue, a tall stout girl, modeled on the lines of the statues in the Place de la Concorde, and who affected free and boyish manners, rushed out noisily crying:

"Who loves me follows me!"

Hubert de Bernès politely took the hint.

Rueille, Henry de Bracieux, Pierrot and Monsieur Giraud turned as one man to Denyse, and Pierrot asked:

"Are you coming, Bijou?"

She saw Jean de Blaye go out talking to Madame de Neizel and answered:

"In a minnte I will rejoin you. I am going to see if the children have gone to bed."

"But, mademoiselle," proposed the abbé, "I can spare you that trouble."

"No. Thanks, Monsieur l'Abbé. But you know I am not happy when I haven't given Fred a kiss."

She went out by a door opposite the terrace, and Monsieur de Clagny said to the marchioness:

“Your granddaughter is decidedly the most charming child imaginable.”

And he added sorrowfully:

“It is when one meets women like that, that one regrets being old!”

“I confess,” said Madame de Bracieux, laughing, that even when you were young, you were hardly the husband I should have dreamed of for Bijou!”

“And why not, if you please?”

“Why, because you have—or at least you had—a rather—how shall I express it? A rather capacious heart.”

“A capacious heart! Ah, yes, *parbleu!* You are right! But then it was the fault of those who didn’t know how to hold me. I can assure you that with a woman like Bijou, I should never have had, what you are pleased to call ‘a capacious heart.’”

“Nonsense,” said Madame de Bracieux incredulously, “how can one ever tell?”

On leaving the drawing-room, Bijou crossed the vestibule, and instead of going up the large staircase which led to the children’s room, she raised the heavy tapestry of shaded green foliage that concealed the door of the butler’s pantry, then just as she was opening the door

she came back and took down from a hook in the vestibule a long, dark cloak, a mackintosh that she was in the habit of wearing in rainy weather. She wrapped herself up in it quickly and went into the butler's pantry where it was perfectly dark. From the kitchen came the loud, coarse voices of the servants who were dining noisily. Denyse approached the open window, then gathering up her skirts she mounted a chair, stepped up on the window sill, and jumped down lightly into the garden. There she hesitated for a moment. The terrace could be seen distinctly in the light from the drawing-rooms, and under the shadows of the chestnut trees she could distinguish the red glow of cigars. Suddenly pulling up the hood of her cloak, she started on a run down the dark alley which led to the avenue.

All this time her admirers were waiting on the terrace for her to come and rejoin them, as she had promised, and the stout Gisele endeavored in vain to organize a game of hide-and-seek. The men lacked enthusiasm; Madame de Tourville feared to injure her gown; and Madame de Juzencourt was walking with Jean de Blaye and Madame de Neizel; she, however, soon returned alone; and as, insisting, Mademoiselle de la Balue wished to drag her off to play, she refused with energy. She was certainly not going to run, when she was

already much too warm from walking. She had even been forced to leave Therese and Monsieur de Blaye and she wasn't equal to any further exertion. Left alone, Jean and Madame de Neizel had continued their walk, she calmly carrying on the conversation already begun, he preoccupied and uneasy. At last, unable to contain himself longer, he asked:

"Why do you not reproach me? Why do you not say some of the terrible things that you are thinking about me?"

She answered very gently:

"Because I have nothing to reproach you about. Because I do not think of you unkindly."

"That means, then, that you love me no longer?"

In a tone so sad that it quite overcame him, she answered:

"I no longer love you? I——"

He felt that she did love him so deeply, that he could not bear to think of the fearful distress it would cause her, if he were sincere with her, and from motives of affection he forced himself to prevaricate:

"Yes," said he, "you ought to know that I think only of you."

"Ah! my poor Jean," she replied, "instead of such a falsehood, you would do far better to tell me the truth."

"And the truth, you think, is that I love you no more?"

"Yes, that is a part of the truth."

Anxiously he inquired:

"And what is the rest?"

"It is that you love Mademoiselle de Courtaix. Ah! don't tell me it isn't. It is so clear."

And after a moment's silence he added:

"And so natural!"

"Will you forgive me?"

"I have nothing to forgive."

In broken accents he murmured anxiously:

"So you don't mean to care for me any more?"

Amazed at such ingenuous selfishness, she answered:

"And so you wish that I should continue to care for you!"

"Do I wish it? But what would become of me without you—you, who are all my life?"

And as she drew back in horror he went on:

"Ah! but what have you thought—that I was going to marry Bijou perhaps?"

"Why, yes."

He was going on to explain why he could not marry his cousin, but reflected that the material impossibility might wound Madame de Neizel, whom he tenderly loved. So he said:

“Bijou is only a sudden and passing fancy for me. What could you expect? It is impossible to live near her and not be intoxicated by her beauty and bewildered by her frank and unconscious coquetry. For fifteen days I have been mad, and am so still. But on seeing you again this evening I feel that it is you alone whom I love—you alone to whom I belong.”

He drew Madame de Neizel's pale face to his shoulder, and stooping down he pressed his lips to her fresh and beautiful mouth, and holding her in his embrace he said, in warm and caressing tones:

“Do you think I could love, as I love you, that child whose finger-tips I have never even touched? Oh, forgive me, you who are so kind! For if I have offended, it was only in thought.”

“I love you still,” she replied. “But let us go back at once; they will be thinking that we are taking a very long walk.”

On seeing them, Madame de Juzencourt, who was seated on the terrace, called out to them:

“What! have you been walking all this time?”

At the same moment Monsieur de Rueille was saying to Bijou, who had just appeared at the window:

"So this is the way that you come back to join us. It is very nice of you."

"I couldn't come back sooner," she replied, turning to go out by the door.

And lowering her voice, she added, drawing closer to her cousin, Pierrot:

"I had to see about the tea, the ices, etc., etc. You mustn't be angry with me."

"Be angry with you!" said Pierrot energetically! "Could any one be angry with you?"

Bijou did not reply. She was paying no attention, but looking at Hubert de Bernès, who was talking with Bertrade, and she was surprised to find him so indifferent to her. To be sure, he was polite, amiable even, but nothing more, and she was not accustomed to so much moderation.

Monsieur de Clagny appeared at a window and called:

"Mademoiselle Bijou, your grandmother is asking for you."

Denyse flew away in a *frou frou* of skirts, without even replying to little Balue, who was saying to her, while pointing to Henry de Bracieux, whose profile stood out in full light:

"Henry is very handsome, isn't he?"

"Bijou," said the marchioness, "are you not going to sing something for us?"

"Oh! but, grandmother, I beg of you," she implored, greatly annoyed.



But Madame de Bracieux insisted:

"Monsieur de Clagny wants to hear you."

"Oh! then I am quite willing," said Bijou sweetly, without taking into consideration that this mode of consent was not a very gracious one to her grandmother's other guests.

She went and took a guitar off of the piano, passed the pink ribbon that was attached to it over her head, and coming back, seated herself in the middle of the half-circle formed by the easy chairs, saying:

"I am going to accompany myself on the guitar. I like it better. It is more easily managed." Then turning to Monsieur de Clagny, she continued: "What would you like to have me sing for you? Do you care for old songs?"

And without waiting she began to sing "The Little Soldier:"

*"Jeme suis engagé  
Pour l'amour d'une blonde."*

[I have enlisted  
In the love of a blond.]

She had a true voice, which she managed cleverly, and she sang with plaintive sweetness the ever-touching story of the little soldier who wishes his heart to be wrapped "in a napkin white."

The drawing-room was filled as soon as Bijou began to sing, and the faces were truly amus-

ing to see. Jean was listening, nervously pulling his blond mustache. Monsieur de Rueille, moved by the mournful air, and irritated by the sight of all these people admiring Denyse, walked up and down at the other end of the drawing-room, affecting not to hear. Pierrot, open-mouthed, was gazing with all his eyes. Little La Balue, with his elbow resting on a *console*, had assumed a stiff and ridiculous pose, and had fixed his dull eyes upon the young girl's, striving to render them magnetic with such bold persistency that Henry de Bracieux was strongly tempted to go up and slap him in the face. And even the Abbé Courteil, his hands clenched, and greatly moved, opened his eyes to the fullest extent and breathed heavily. Hubert de Bernès alone listened with polite attention, but was comparatively indifferent.

All the women, with the exception, perhaps, of Gisèle de la Balue, admired Bijou sincerely. Madame de Neizel listened with sad eyes and a kindly smile. As to Monsieur de Clagny, all that there was in him of sensibility and tenderness seemed to go out to this pretty, delicate creature; his eyes, full of love, dwelt equally upon Bijou's charming face, her little rosy fingers running over the strings, and her lissome figure. And when she had finished singing, she came up to him, without paying

any attention to the compliments that were showered upon her, saying, sweetly and coaxingly:

“It hasn't bored you too much, has it?”

For a moment he did not answer. Emotion choked him. At last he said:

“I shall often ask you again for that song! Yes. I shall come to see you, and you shall sing ‘The Little Soldier.’ Will you be so good?”

A desire seized him to hear Bijou sing for him, for him alone, without sharing her voice and her charm with all these people whom he loathed.

She replied, with a happy smile:

“You shall come as often as you please, and I will sing anything that you like.”

Then she glided quickly over to Jean de Blaye, isolated at the other end of the drawing-room, and said:

“It annoys you when I am singing, doesn't it?”

Surprised at the question, and surprised also that she should interest herself in him, he said:

“No, indeed! Why do you ask?”

“Because I just noticed you—pulling your mustache furiously—and you looked as if you were annoyed—ah! You did indeed!”

“It is only an idea of yours!”

"Why, no! I never have 'ideas,' as you say, where those I love are concerned. I am a good deal of a clairvoyant on the contrary. Why are you frowning?"

"But I am not frowning."

"Yes, you are! And any one would say that what I have just said annoyed you!"

"What have you just said?"

"That I was a clairvoyant! And it annoys you, because you are afraid that I shall see that there is some trouble."

Greatly worried, he asked:

"Some trouble? What is it?"

"What is it? I don't know at all! But surely there is something the matter. You are no longer the same since we have been at Bracieux."

"Really!" said he, trying to turn it into a joke. "Am I so changed? Well! the most curious part of it all is, that I was not in the least aware of it."

Bijou shrugged her pretty shoulders.

"Don't try to deceive me, my poor Jean! I know you too well, don't you see? Yes, you are so changed! You have gradually become brusque, anxious, and preoccupied. Come! do you want me to tell you why?"

Seated at some distance from them, Madame de Neizel was regarding them with the same sad air of gentle resignation. Bijou's violet

eye glanced at her sideways, gleaming beneath the heavily fringed lids, and she concluded thus:

“You love some one who does not love you!”

Jean de Blaye blushed violently and said:

“You don't know what you're talking about!”

“Then why do you blush? Oh! how proud you are! You are vexed because I have guessed it.”

After a silence, she added:

“Have you told her of it?”

“Have I told her what? And whom do you mean? But you are crazy, my poor Bijou!”

“To mad——”

She stopped short, her face turned toward Madame de Neizel, and concluded:

“To the one whom you love. Have you told her that you loved her?”

He murmured in a stunned sort of way:

“No!”

“Are you afraid to? But why? I am all the time hearing grandmother, Bertrade, and Paul, and Uncle Alexis say that you are one of those persons whom everyone falls in love with. So she would be sure to love you, and willingly marry you.”

She leaned over to him, almost grazing his ear, without regard to the effect produced by this familiarity, and suggested:

"Now what do you say to this? If you would like me to I would gladly speak to her! And I am sure of her answer."

With a sudden movement, Jean arose, and seizing Bijou's hand, exclaimed:

"What are you saying?"

"I am saying that she will love you, if she doesn't love you already."

"But who are you talking about? Who do you mean?" he murmured in alarm.

With a hesitating and ingenuous air, she murmured so low that he could hardly hear the beginning of the sentence:

"I am speaking of Bijou," cried Pierrot, separating them rudely; "grandmother sends you word that you have forgotten the tea!"

And observing their excited faces, he asked:

"Upon my word, you're both of you as red as beets! To be sure, it's perfectly broiling in here!"

And as Bijou ran off, he continued:

"They thought over there that you were quarreling."

For the sake of saying something, Jean replied:

"Ah! Did they, really?"

"Yes! particularly grandmother, who was sure of it. That's the reason she sent me to get Bijou to make the tea. Do you mean to say that nothing is bothering Bijou?"

“And what do you suppose she could have to bother her, my dear fellow?” And he added, smilingly:

“Who do you think would ever dare to bother her? The position in this house would not be a very pleasant one for any such person!”

The boy replied with great animation:

“Because she is so lovely! And so kind. I adore her! And so does Paul! And so does Henry! And so does Monsieur Giraud! And so do Bertrade’s boys. And so does the abbé. And so does everybody. Down to little La Balue, who devours her with his eyes. He who never notices anybody. Yes. He was telling her, I don’t know what, in a corner, after dinner, and then, while she was singing? Did you see what eyes he was making at her? No, but did you see them?”

“Oh, hush up, now!” said Jean, irritated; “If you only knew how tiresome you were, my poor Pierrot!”

As Bijou was re-entering the drawing-room, Henry de Bracieux stopped her on the way.

“Tell me, now,” said he with vexation, “what La Balue was saying to you that was so interesting, a little while ago?”

“Whereabouts?”

“Here! After dinner!”

“Here,” repeated Bijou, who seemed to be thinking.

"After dinner? Come! now. You were just the person he was talking to me about."

"About me?"

"Yes, about you! He thinks you are very, very handsome! But he thinks you don't set a proper value on your looks."

"Have you finished making fun of me?"

"But I assure you I am not making fun of you. He even advised me to tell you to wear, instead of those frightfully high collars—this is what he said, you understand—Van Dyck collars, which would not conceal your neck. Yes. For it appears that you have a very fine neck, and bones, and teeth. I should like you to hear him repeat the list of your attractions."

"My attractions, mine?"

"Yes. You fancied, perhaps, that it was about mine that he was talking! Not at all! He told me, besides, that he was going to recount all this in verse! Not the Van Dyck collars, but the rest."

"He is a fool, that creature!"

"Oh! dear me, no! He is only insignificant!"

"You are so good! You never run anybody down. Attention! the La Balue clan are beating a retreat." And in an undertone he joyously exclaimed:

"Hip! Hip! Hurrah!"



Monsieur de la Balue, who was coming back from the vestibule, carrying a lot of cloaks, regarded him with astonishment. And now a little family scene took place in the hall.

The good man wished to absolutely compel his wife and his daughter to envelop their heads in common-looking knitted worsted shawls, to avoid taking cold; they persisted in not putting them on, and in the end he was compelled to yield. Bijou, when she bade Madame de Neizel good-by, gave her her little hand, and gazed so directly into her eyes, with such candid and curious expression, that the young woman turned away, annoyed by the persistency of this singular glance.

It seemed to her that this child had discovered her secret, and it caused her infinite pain.

But Bijou's charm was so great, her power of attraction so strong, that she experienced only a heartfelt affection for the delightful little creature, who was unconsciously robbing her of her happiness.

"*Ouf*," said Denyse joyously, coming back into the drawing-room, where there was no one now left but Monsieur de Clagny and the family. "Do you know that it is half-past twelve?"

"They were all of them regular fixtures. I thought that they were never going to leave."

"The La Balue family is not a handsome one," said the abbé.

"But they are not so very ugly," objected the young girl. "When you're once used to them, you don't mind."

"Little La Balue is horrible," said Madame de Bracieux, "and then there is something cold and clammy about him; when you shake hands with him, it is like touching an eel."

"And the girl, too," said Pierrot, "is 'awful! She has little eyes like a pig. And Louis has little eyes, too.'"

"They are very nice, all the same," said Bijou contemptuously; while Madame de Bracieux added:

"And they are of good birth. They are descended from La Balue, from the cardinal, from the true——"

"*Mon Dieu*," said Bijou gently, "it would have been better for Gisèle not to have descended from the 'iron cage.' And to have larger eyes—but as it can't be helped——"

Monsieur de Clagny begun to laugh, and, looking around for his hat that was hidden in a corner, he remarked:

"It requires some courage to leave a drawing-room like this—for one does not know how he will be torn to pieces."

"Don't be afraid," Bijou assured him. "We won't tear you to pieces, although you would

be able to stand the process, but I promise you that you shall be spared. Will you believe me?"

And while affectionately pressing the little hands stretched out to him, the count replied:

"I will believe you."

## VIII.

"Are you going to ride this morning, Bijou?" cried Pierrot, leaning out of the window.

Denyse, who was crossing the court, pointed to her riding skirt, and said:

"Do you suppose that I would amuse myself by walking about in a cloth skirt on such a hot day, if I were not going to ride?"

"Where are you going?"

"Why?"

"So that we can follow you, M. Giraud and I, at eleven o'clock."

The professor's head now appeared behind Pierrot, while Bijou answered:

"I am going to the Borderettes to give a message to Lavenue."

Then perceiving Giraud, she said sweetly:

"Good-morning!"—then—"*au revoir!*"

Patatras was waiting in the shade. The old coachman, who always accompanied Bijou, mounted her, then got up on his horse, preparing to follow. On seeing him, Pierrot called out again:

"How does it happen that not one of your cousins are riding with you?"

"I didn't tell them that I was going out."

“ Ah!” said he, with regret, “ if I were only free! I’d go with you in a minute.”

She turned around in her saddle with a supple movement, and replied, laughing:

“ I shall never tell you again.”

The flies were annoying Patatras, so as soon as Bijou had passed the gates she started him off into a galop, and cantered away in the burning heat, facing the sun, which shone with ardor on her pretty face, but failed to turn it red. She only paused when she had reached the precipitous path, covered with rolling stones, that led to the Bcyderettes. At the foot of the hill, in the little valley, fresh and verdant, despite the drought, arose the farmhouse of pure white, crowned with bricks, looking like a brand new toy. When she had reached the foot of this steep descent, Bijou drew a small mirror from her pocket, and arranged her veil, and the scattered locks of hair that were flying in wild confusion about her ears and neck. Then she plucked from the hedge a bunch of mulberry blooms and fastened them in her waist, arranged the lace-trimmed handkerchief peeping out of the little side-pocket, and, resuming her canter, rode up to the door of the farmhouse. A harsh voice called out:

“ Are you there, *Mait* Lavenue?”

And a small man-servant came out of the house, saying:

"Doesn't seem to hear me. I go look."

A moment after a tall man of thirty-five appeared, thin, blond, with a slight stoop, a perfect type of a Norman peasant; he was panting, perspiring, and so red in the face that he positively seemed purple.

"Oh," said he, trying to get back his breath, "it is you, Mademoiselle Denyse. It is you, then."

"Why, yes, Monsieur Lavenue," said she smilingly, "it is I."

Advancing, with outstretched hand, he asked:

"Ain't you going to get down?"

"No, thanks. I only came to give you a message from grandmother. It is for the confirmation breakfast on next Monday, but you ought to know that, as you are mayor."

"Yes, I know."

"Of course, grandmother would like to have, on that day, some very fine peaches, some very fine pears, in fact a quantity of the fine things that grow in the Borderettes garden."

"They shall all be sent, Mademoiselle Denyse. Madame la Marquise can rest easy. And they shall be well chosen."

Then, seeing that the young girl was turning her horse, he said, gazing at her in speechless admiration:

"You're not going away already? Won't

you refresh yourself with a little drop? With a bowl of milk? For that's what you like so much, good milk."

And he added persuasively, while taking hold of Patatras' bridle:

"A little drop would do the horse good, too. He's so hot."

The language of "Mait" Lavenne always amused Bijou. For this tall brute of a Norman, who had emigrated ten years before to Lorraine, had lost nothing of his primitive accent.

It was Madame de Bracieux, who, discontented with the farmers of Lorraine, had conceived the idea of this importation. Never had Charlemagne Lavenue fraternized with the people of the country. He was feared and admired by these simple, ignorant men, who saw him grow rich under the same conditions in which others had been ruined. He had gradually transformed "The Borderettes" into a little Normandy, by getting "people from home," to settle there; and so strong was his position that he, the intruder, had succeeded in having himself elected mayor of Bracieux, jumping quite over the heads of former dignitaries. Seeing that Bijou did not reply, he took her by the waist and placed her on the ground, saying:

"You will. Won't you?"

Then giving the horse to the coachman to hold, he showed her the door, stepping aside so that Bijou could pass, when she suddenly exclaimed, in pleased tones:

"Your house is so nice, Monsieur Lavenue. Did I ever see this room before? No! I don't think so."

"You have seen it, mademoiselle—only—it's because it's just been whitewashed. And, you know, that changes things!"

Smilingly she resumed:

"By the time you are married it will be quite beautiful."

"Mait" Lavenue, who was gazing greedily at Bijou, raised his bushy head, shook it, and said, with some hesitation:

"I can't decide to give the farm a mistress, because I can't find one to my mind——"

And after a moment's silence he concluded with:

"Among those whom I could have."

"But why not? Any one of the young girls in Bracieux, and in Combes, and in any of the villages near Borderettes, would marry Monsieur Lavenue! And there are some very pretty ones among them too."

"I don't find 'em so!" he replied, twisting around the enormous cap that he never left off wearing, no matter what was the season.

"You are hard to please! Don't you think Catherine Lebour is pretty?"



"No, Mademoiselle Denyse."

"Nor Josephine Lacaille?"

"No, Mademoiselle Denyse."

"Nor Louise Pature?"

"No, mad'moiselle."

She began to laugh!

"Then, is there no woman who can please you?"

"Yes. Why, there is—there's one."

"Who is it?" she asked, her beautiful, innocent eyes gazing fixedly at the peasant.

Lavenue grew still redder, and, stooping down with an awkward movement to pick up his cap, which he had just dropped, he murmured:

"I can't tell you. She isn't any one whom I could have for a wife!"

Bijou did not hear his answer. With figure and head thrown back, she was slowly drinking a second bowl of milk.

And the farmer, who was rising from his stooping posture, stood motionless for one moment, his eyes wide open, contemplating this fragile creature with timid and awe-struck admiration. And as Bijou, who had finished drinking, examined him smilingly, he said, while drying his forehead, which was streaming with perspiration:

"*Nom de nom!* how hot it is!"

"Thank you, Monsieur Lavenue," said

Denyse, who had arisen. "The milk is delicious."

"And so, are you going right off like that, already?" he asked, with a mournful look.

"What do you mean by 'already?' Why I must have been here for at least a quarter of an hour!"

"It hasn't seemed long, this quarter of an hour!" he murmured:

And in a very low tone he added:

"I thank you very much, Mademoiselle Denyse, for the honor that you have done me. I shall not forget it—you may be very sure!"

Bijou, in getting up, had dropped the little bouquet from her waist; and as she was looking toward the door to see if the horses were there, the tall peasant got down on his knees, and, stretching out his brawny arm, snatched the flowers, and concealed them quickly in the opening of his blouse.

The servant was about to get down in order to mount Denyse. She motioned to him not to move.

"Monsieur Lavenue can quite well put me up on my horse," said she; "he is very strong."

She was just about to put out her foot, to place it in the farmer's hand, but he did not give her the time. Seizing her waist with both hands, he placed her in the middle of the

saddle. Overcome with surprise, she exclaimed:

“Ah! indeed! I was right when I said you were strong! How were you ever able to lift me up like that, at arm's length, when the horse is so tall?”

Then, as he stood for a moment without speaking, breathing hard, she concluded:

“There! So, you see! I was too heavy! You are quite out of breath.”

Without leaving him the time to reply, she rode off, saying:

“*Au revoir!* And thank you again.”

As she was going out of the court she turned around and called out to the farmer, who had remained nailed to the same spot, immovable, his arms hanging:

“Don't forget grandmother's peaches and pears, Monsieur Lavenue.”

Bijou looked at her watch; it was five minutes past eleven. She had just time to get home without hurrying. She had to give Monsieur Giraud and Pierrot the time to come and meet her, and the recess did not begin before eleven. While going through the village she picked from a large vine of clematis, which was hanging over the wall of a cemetery, a bouquet to replace the one she had lost. Then when she again found herself in the country she once more took out her little

glass and lightly fluffed up her hair, which no longer curled, being rendered limp by the heat. At half-past eleven, not seeing those whom she was expecting arrive, she grew a little impatient, and forced Patratas into a gallop; but as he was exhausted he suddenly came to a standstill, wishing at all hazards to graze on the hedges. All at once her pretty, joyous face assumed a serious, almost sad, expression. She was in a little meadow on the borders of a wood, when at this moment a voice cried out:

“*Hi!* Bijou, is this the way you’re burning us up?”

She stopped short, with a surprised look and turned back. Pierrot and Monsieur Giraud, who had been stretched out in the shade, got up at once, leaving the impression of their forms in the trampled grass.

“What! is it you already?” said she. “I didn’t think that I should meet you at such a distance from home. At what time did you leave?”

“A little before the time was up,” replied Pierrot; and he added mischievously, with a side glance at his professor: “Monsieur Giraud was a perfect love. He left off a little earlier, without my being obliged to urge him a great deal. And now, if we want to get back to Bra-cieux by one o’clock we’ll have to make tracks.”

While they were walking beside Bijou she asked, addressing Giraud:

“Have you recovered since last evening?”

“Recovered, mademoiselle!” said the young professor, “why recovered?”

“Because you couldn’t have been much amused. Monsieur de Tourville and Monsieur de Juzencourt both in succession blockaded you in corners to relate to you, one of them, how Charles de Tourville had embarked with William the Conqueror in 1066; and the other, how a Juzencourt in 1477 had fought against Charles the Bold under the walls of Nancy. Isn’t it true?”

“Quite true. And Monsieur de Juzencourt added that there was nothing but blue blood in his family. I didn’t quite understand why he told me that.”

“In order to prove to you that, traced clearly, to be sure only from 1477, but without the slightest *mésalliance*, the Juzencourts are more distinguished than the Tourvilles.”

“Ah!”

“Yes. Monsieur de Tourville has married a young lady who is all very well, but whose father is in the Bourse, and whose name is Chaillot. So you see that, on the Tourville side, if the blood is older, it is less pure. You kept your countenance so well, while listening to all that stuff, that I should certainly have laughed if you hadn’t looked so unhappy.”

"It wasn't due to the dullness caused by stories of the Tourvilles and Juzencourts that gave him that look," observed Pierrot. "For some time past he is always like that; even when he is with me; and I can tell you, too, that I don't overwhelm him with tales of Charles the Bold or of William the Conqueror."

"I am quite sure of it," said Bijou, laughing.

"*Mon Dieu!* there wouldn't be any trouble about it; I could do it very well; but *zut!*"

"*Zut* again," said the young tutor, annoyed and in a tone of reproach. "You know that Monsieur de Jonzac detests that way of speaking; he would like you to be more of a purist, more choice in your conversation."

"Nonsense! If papa were to talk with my friends he would hear a good many more such expressions, and he'd get used to them very soon; it's always so. It's a question of influence."

"I can't very well imagine Uncle Alexis being influenced by the conversation of your companions," said Bijou.

While speaking she stopped suddenly, pointing to something in the woods.

"Oh, what beautiful fruit! Aren't they pretty—those bunches?"

"Would you like to have some of them?" proposed Pierrot.

"I should indeed; they are so fine."

Pierrot plunged into the underbrush; they could hear the cracking of the branches that he demolished on the way; and soon the red top of the tree shook and bent over, lowering and rising in sudden shocks.

Bijou, with her head inclined and a vague look in her eyes, seemed to be dreaming, oblivious of what was passing around her.

Pierrot's voice crying, "Must I pick very many?" made her tremble.

Giraud, who was gently patting Patatras' shoulder, asked timidly:

"Have you anything to trouble you, mademoiselle?"

"I? Why, no. Why do you ask?"

"Because you don't seem like yourself. You appear somewhat sad."

"Sad? Do I?"

"Yes. Just now, when you were passing by us without seeing us, you appeared sad, very sad, and now again."

"A little while ago it is quite possible. Yes, I was not gay then. But now there is no reason why I shouldn't be. On the contrary, I am so happy here in these velvety fields, under this beautiful sun, that I love so dearly! She concluded without noticing the young man and speaking as in a dream. "Yes, I am so happy! I should like to remain like this forever, forever."

She pressed to her lips the little bouquet of clematis with which she had been toying for the last minute or two, then replaced it in her waist, without noticing the hand that Girand extended passionately toward the poor little flowers that had already begun to droop. Pierrot came out of the thicket, bearing an enormous bunch of fruit. Bijou, who had resumed her smiling mien, thanked him, saying:

“You are so nice, my dear Pierrot! and it’s awfully good of you! particularly, as you’ll have the trouble of carrying them for another mile.”

“Pshaw! I’d do a good deal more than that, to give you any pleasure!”

“You are a good Pierrot!”

“’Tisn’t because I’m good!”

He went up close to her, rubbing against the horse, and concluded in a very low tone with:

“It’s because I love you!”

Bijou did not reply.

At the end of a moment, Pierrot resumed:

“I tell you what, you sang well last night!—didn’t she, Monsieur Giraud?”

“Wonderfully well,” said the professor; “and you have such a pretty voice—so pure, so fresh! Ah! I can understand now what I didn’t understand yesterday.”

“And pray, what is that?”



"The infinite power of the voice! Yes, before hearing you I was ignorant of what I now know very well. You will sing again, will you not, mademoiselle? When I think that for the three weeks I have been in the château I have never before had the happiness of——"

"I will gladly give you this 'happiness' whenever you please."

She was jesting now. The little creature of the dream, a while ago, had again become—Bijou. As they neared the castle she shaded her eyes with her hand and said:

"What's going on there? the front door is crowded with people."

Pierrot answered, with annoyance:

"*Parbleu!* It's all of them watching for you. There's Paul. There's Henry. And Monsieur le Abbé. And Uncle Alexis, and Bertrade. Let me see. Who are those? You are right. There are some other people. Ah! it is father Dubuisson, and Jeanne, and there's another man besides whom I don't know. A man all in black—*beu!* he must suffer a good deal from cold to come out to the country in a black suit on such a hot day."

"Perhaps it's Monsieur Spiegel," said Bijou, "Jeanne's *fiancé*. He was to come to us."

"Yes, it must be. Say now. Doesn't he look solemn? Jeanne's *fiancé*, and so does she too."

Bijou had turned around to see what had

become of Giraud, who was not saying anything. He was following the young girl, adoring her like an idol, at this moment, when Pierrot was very much occupied in looking in the direction of the castle; the little bouquet of clematis fell from Bijou's waist and rolled at the professor's feet. He picked it up quickly, and slipped it into his pocketbook, after having kissed it with a species of passionate devotion, and the old coachman, who was standing behind him, silent and correct, suddenly began to laugh.

## IX.

MONSIEUR DUBUISSON, whom the students were in the habit of calling "Father Dubuiss-son," was the principal of the academy. He had brought his daughter to Bracieux, where she was to pass a week with Bijou. Jeanne's *fiancé*, a young professor, recently appointed one of the faculty of Pont-sur-Loire, had accompanied them.

"How warm you must be, my Bijou," eried the marchioness, appearing at a window.

"Why, no, grandmother," replied Denyse, leaning on Monsieur de Rueille's arm, as she got down off the horse; "Monsieur Giraud and Pierrot are the ones who ought to be warm. As to me, I'm all right."

She gave Jeanne a hearty kiss, said good-morning to Monsieur Dubuiss-son, and with a hesitating air turned to the professor, who was gazing at her in open-mouthed admiration.

"Bijou, this is Monsieur Spiegel," said Mademoiselle Dubuiss-son.

With a pretty gesture, that was very graceful and taking, Bijou gave her soft little hand to the young man, saying:

"We are old friends already."

Then leaning over, she murmured in Jeanne's ear:

"He is charming, do you know, quite charming!"

Did Monsieur Spiegel hear these words of amiable appreciation, or was it by chance that he grew intensely red at that moment?

"Go quick and change your dress, Bijou," commanded the marchioness.

"But, grandmother, I am not warm—really and truly."

"Come here, so that I can see."

Bijou went obediently and sat down beside Madame de Bracieux; then leaning over, she stretched out her neck, as she was now quite accustomed to these hygienic demonstrations.

"Well, grandmother," said she, when her grandmother had withdrawn her hand that she had introduced between the collar of the shirt and the skin, "well, didn't I tell you——"

"It's perfectly true," grumbled Madame de Bracieux. "She isn't warm. It is incredible. Then you may stay as you are if you wish to."

She made her granddaughter turn around in front of her, and, evidently pleased with the effect, remarked:

"Besides, you will do very well. These white *pique* habits are extremely becoming."

"They are becoming to Bijou," said Ber-



*"He picked it up quickly and slipped it into  
his pocketbook."*



trade, "because everything is becoming with her complexion; but these little English habits are fearfully trying to the majority of women."

The Abbé Courteil regarded the black skirt, the white jacket, and Bijou herself, and said with conviction:

"In any case, this combination of black and white is most charming. Mademoiselle Denyse looks like a magnified swallow."

"Eh! eh!" said the marchioness, regarding the abbé with a benevolent look, "that's a very pretty comparison."

While every one was thus taken up with Bijou, she, very amiably, without paying any attention to what they were saying about her, was talking with Monsieur Spiegel, who felt rather alone among so many strangers.

He was a young man, with a serious and gentle expression, who might have appeared pedantic had not the brightness of his eyes neutralized the severity of his mouth and the austerity of his demeanor. He was quite tall and slender, dressed in well-cut clothes of somber hue, and in general appearance gave somewhat the impression of a distinguished young clergyman. Fascinated and dazzled by Bijou's grace and beauty, he gazed upon her with eyes full of ecstasy and wonder, while she examined him, when unobserved, surprised to find Jeanne's *fiancé* so presentable. The breakfast

appeared long. All of the marchioness' guests were observing each other, some preoccupied and silent, others more loquacious, but singularly preoccupied as well.

Madame de Bracieux, without in the least understanding the cause, was conscious of a certain change in the situation, of a sort of transformation that had taken place during the last few days. She no longer recognized the little world that she had hitherto been accustomed to guide so readily according to her will. Monsieur Spiegel and Bijou, who were sitting next to each other, were the only ones who conversed with the animation of those who talk, not only because they wish to say something, but because they have something to say. Jeanne Dubuisson, who was seated at Monsieur Spiegel's right hand, turned toward him several times with a little flash in her kind blue eye. She reflected with chagrin that it was quite evident that her *fiancé* took more pleasure in looking at Bijou than he had ever taken in regarding her. And a feeling of sadness came over her when she thought of how he had never gazed at her with eyes like those which were now fixed upon Bijou.

Jeanne, who was nineteen, appeared much older than Bijou, although they were somewhat of the same style. Her hair, which like Bijou's was blond, was, however, less *cendré*,



less bright, but thicker; her eyes were of a less rare tint of blue; her teeth were as white but less regular, her complexion less brilliant, and her bones larger. Bijou, who was quite short, wore too high heels, in order to increase her height, while Jeanne, who was rather tall, always wore very low flat English heels. While one produced a certain dazzling and brilliant impression, the other passed almost unperceived, her beauty derived rather from the great charm of her exquisite kindness of heart.

After breakfast Bijou led Jeanne into the park. She had hardly seen her since her marriage had been arranged.

"Why," asked she, "did you tell me in such a mild way that M. Spiegel was nice?"

"Why," said Mademoiselle Dubuisson, "because I think he is; don't you?"

"Don't pretend to be so stupid. You know perfectly well that he is a great deal more than 'nice'."

"But——"

"Yes, indeed. From the description I received of him from you I expected to see an ordinary little man, of a somewhat staid appearance, and instead you have introduced a man who is really charming. One usually lets one know beforehand—one doesn't spring such surprises upon one's friends," and without

leaving Jeanne the time to answer, she asked, "When did you meet him?"

"This spring, at Easter, when we went to Bordeaux to visit my aunt."

"And was it arranged all at once?"

"No, but I liked him from the first."

"That's just like you—you're such a soft-hearted creature."

"And I very soon saw that he greatly enjoyed being with me."

"And then?"

"And then we parted, and my heart was full, naturally, for I thought that I had deceived myself—that he didn't care for me at all."

"You never said anything to me about it."

"No, for in the first place I imagined that it was all over. Then, to no one, not even to you, would I wish to speak of such a subject. It seems to me that when one is very much in love, one should only talk of one's love to oneself. It is the only way one can be truly understood."

"Then," said Bijou, laughing, "you think that I understand nothing about love?"

"About love as I understand it? no! You are too pretty, too much made of, too much adored, to be able, like myself, to concentrate your heart upon one sole intense affection."

Bijou sighed, and said with sadness:

“It must be so nice to love like that.”

“Dear me, it would be easy enough for you. Your cousin De Blaye adores you. Oh, don’t attempt to deny it. It is quite evident. I saw it at once.”

“You are dreaming,” said Bijou in astonishment.

“No, indeed, he loves you, loves you madly, and he seems to me a man worthy of your love.”

“Instead of talking such nonsense, finish telling me about your betrothal. We had got as far as where you had left Bordeaux—when you were thinking that all was over. Then after that?”

“Then after that, fifteen days ago, the chair of philosophy was left vacant, and papa learned with surprise that M. Spiegel had been appointed to fill it, and he said to me, ‘It’s a disgrace—Pont-sur-Loire is not as important a place as Bordeaux.’ And then, after all, it wasn’t in the least a disgrace.”

“So it was he who had requested this change.”

“Precisely, and last Monday he came to the house with his mother, who asked papa for his consent to my marriage with her son.”

“What kind of a person is his mother?”

“Very nice—still handsome, but very severe—a little hard.”

"You mustn't mind that; all Protestant women give that effect."

"How did you know that she was a Protestant?"

"Because I supposed that she was of the same religion as her son."

"But who told you that M. Spiegel was a Protestant?"

"Nobody. I saw it at once; it didn't take me long to discover it."

"But how could you tell?"

"I couldn't say, but I was sure of it all the same. You are very fortunate to marry a Protestant, they are more serious, more considerate, more devoted."

"Yes, perhaps so; but his mother seems, as I said, very severe, very—and she is to live with us."

"Well, so much the better. Isn't it a safeguard to have a rather austere mother with you? It at once inspires respect."

"I don't think that I require the presence of any one to inspire respect, and in any case it seems to me that so far as that goes the husband is——"

"Oh! the husband doesn't count!"

"Doesn't count?"

"No, now with parents it is quite different, and I have been educated to believe in parents—in the belief that their presence brings not

only respect but happiness to the hearth-stone."

"Well, I think so, too, where papa is concerned; but after all Madame Spiegel is a stranger to me—and I am a little vexed with her for coming to disturb the intimacy of our fireside, that I should have so much enjoyed."

"You must say to yourself that she is your husband's mother, and that as he loves her your affection for him ought to make you care for her, too."

"You are right. How I wish I were like you, my dear Bijou. You are so much better than I."

"I? Oh, I am an angel, that's understood."

"You are joking—but it is true, now."

"Tell me. Won't it make me feel very badly to leave your *fiancé* for this whole week that you have so kindly promised to pass with me?"

"No; besides he will come to see me with papa—with your grandmother's permission—and then he is going to Paris for several days."

"And here am I, like a goose, forcing you to walk with me—without stopping to think that the unfortunate youth is surely grieving over your absence. Don't you want to go back?"

"Yes, I should like to."

A gleam of light stole from beneath Bijou's curling lashes, as she asked, with an air of indifference:

"Tell me now—what was it that gave you such a strange idea—that Jean de Blaye was in love with me."

"The way in which he looked at you all the while we were at breakfast, and also his annoyance when we were awaiting you this morning at the front door and saw you arrive with little Jonzae and his tutor."

"You have too much imagination."

"No, I am sure that he likes you—a great deal. And you?"

"I?"

"Yes. Don't you like him?"

"No; at least not in the way that you mean. He is my cousin—and I like him as one likes a very nice cousin—but whom one knows too well to care for in any other way."

"That's a pity."

"But why?"

"Because it seems to me that you might be happy with him."

Bijou shook her head.

"I don't think so. I require a more serious husband than Jean."

"More serious? But Monsieur de Blaye must be at least thirty-four or thirty-five years old."

"What difference does that make? He is not serious, you know. Not at all."

"Oh! I didn't know."

"As to me, I should like to have a husband who cared for no one but myself."

"Any one as pretty and attractive as yourself can rest perfectly easy on that score."

Bijou suddenly came to a standstill in the middle of the walk, and shading her eyes exclaimed:

"Isn't that a carriage over there in the avenue?"

"Yes, certainly."

"But is it really a carriage? I can't see anything. I am so near-sighted."

"It is a phaeton with two horses, and a gentleman driving, whom I do not know."

"Is it really?"

And as Jeanne nodded she said:

"It is Monsieur de Clagny, a friend of grandmother's, the proprietor of La Norinière."

"Ah! that man who is so rich?"

"So rich? What makes you think that he is so very rich? I never heard a word about it."

"Why, yes, he has an immense fortune—all in lands."

But Bijou was not listening. She had gathered a daisy, that was growing in the grass, bending its timid head over the pathway, and quite absorbed she was pulling out the leaves,

"Well," asked Jeanne, smiling, "how does he love you?"

Bijou raised her pretty head in surprise.

"Who do you mean?"

"The one about whom you were questioning the daisy, Marguerite."

"I don't know. I wasn't asking about anybody."

"And what is the answer?"

"Passionately."

"Well, it has answered for every one."

And going up the front steps behind her little friend, Jeanne added:

"It's true. Every one loves you, and you really deserve it."

When the two young girls entered the hall, the somewhat sleepy countenances again awoke to life. Henry de Bracieux murmured an "At last. It's about time." Which caused his grandmother to glance at him keenly. While Monsieur de Clagny almost ran forward to meet Bijou:

"Oh! how nice!" said she sweetly; "it is so kind of you to come and see us so soon again."

"Too kind! You're going to have more than you want of me."

"Never!" replied she, smiling.

Then taking Jeanne's hand she introduced her.



"Jeanne Dubuisson, my best friend, whom I am going to lose, for she is going to be married."

"But," said the young girl in a grieved tone, "why do you say that, Bijou. You know very well that, married or not, I shall always be your friend."

"Yes, so they all say; but it is never the same thing. When one is married one belongs no more to one's parents, nor to one's friends; one belongs to one's husband, and to him alone."

"How beautiful are these illusions," said Monsieur de Clagny in an undertone.

"What is that you are saying?" asked Bijou, turning suddenly to him.

"Something stupid."

"No. I am perfectly sure that you are making fun of me. You needn't shake your head. I know that you are, all the same; and it's because I said that when one is married one no longer belongs to any one but one's husband. Well, that may be very ridiculous, but it's my opinion, and I am sure that Monsieur Spiegel is of the same opinion too."

The young man smiled and bowed without answering, and Bijou, still addressing the count, said:

"Have they introduced Monsieur Spiegel to you? No! then let me repair the omission.

Monsieur Spiegel, Jeanne's *fiancé*—who does not dare to maintain that I am right, because he has no one to help him—it's quite true, he is the only husband here, or almost the only one."

"Well, and Paul," said the marchioness, laughing.

"Paul! Ah, yes! that's true. I didn't think of him. Still the unmarried men predominate. Henry, Pierrot, the Abbé, Monsieur Giraud, Jeanne—ah! what is the matter with Jean? he has a queer look."

Jean de Blaye, who was seated in a large bamboo chair, with half closed eyes, and his head leaning on his hand, appeared to be sleeping.

"I have a headache," he answered.

And as she persisted in questioning him as to how he had got it, he exclaimed crossly:

"Why it's the *migraine*; can any one tell how one gets it; one has it, and that's all one knows about it."

Bijou had stepped behind the easy-chair, in which her cousin was reclining, without allowing herself to be discouraged by his *brusquerie*, and regarding his pale face, his drawn features, the dark circles under his eyes, she continued:

"You must be very ill to look like that, and above all to admit that anything is the matter with you—you who always pose as a strong man. My poor Jean. How I wish I could do something for you."

Then, leaning over, upon the young man's burning lids she pressed a lingering kiss. Jean de Blaye grew quite pale, then very red, and rising suddenly, with a quick gesture he exclaimed, in an irritated tone, and with uncertain glance:

"You frightened me. It's very stupid of me, I know, but I didn't see you, and then you took me by surprise."

Monsieur de Clagny had arisen also, in a sort of rage, on seeing Bijou kiss her cousin, but understanding how absurd such jealous emotion must appear, he reseated himself and said in ironical tones:

"If this remedy does not avail, Blaye's disease must be incurable."

Monsieur de Rueille regarded Jean, who was leaving the room, with envy, and addressing Bijou in tremulous tones, murmured:

"When I have the *migraine*—which often happens, alas!—you are less compassionate."

Monsieur Giraud seemed petrified on the low chair where he was seated; with eyes fixed on the ground, and compressed lips, he seemed to have seen nothing.

But Pierrot exclaimed boldly:

"What luck he has! that plague of a Jean."

"Of course, of course," replied the Abbé Courteil, with conviction, "but he has a bad headache, all the same; *le pauvres, monsieur!* I know all about *la migraine!*"

The marchioness leaned over toward Bertrade, and whispered in her ear, glancing toward Bijou.

"Isn't she charming? the dear little creature, and so good-hearted, and above all such a child. How simply and naturally she kissed that *blasé* Jean—it seemed to frighten him."

"Didn't you observe that he left the room at once, without even saying good-by to Monsieur Dubuisson and Monsieur Spiegel who are going away?" said Bertrade.

The marchioness turned toward the two men who were advancing to make their adieu, and said:

"Since we are keeping your Jeanne with us, I hope that you will come and see her often."

"Do you mind staying at Bracieux? Now, tell me truly," said Bijou, addressing her friend.

"You know I shouldn't be in the least vexed with you for preferring your *fiancé* to your friend.

"Spiegel is obliged to go and spend some days at Paris," said Monsieur Dubuisson, "and on his return I will come with him to bring Jeanne back."

On leaving the drawing-room, a few moments before, Jean de Blaye had experienced most unpleasant sensations. Bijou's innocent kiss, bestowed so frankly before everybody, had

greatly distressed him. Must he decide to tell Bijou of his love for her? And even admitting that she would not refuse to listen to him, was he in a position to marry this marvelous jewel, formed for a luxurious setting? Many times had he thought of it already, and had always told himself that it would be an absurd piece of madness on his part. And then, Bijou would never love him enough to accept such a condition of mild mediocrity. As he had promised Madame de Nézel to go to Pont-sur-Loire on the following day, he wrote her a line excusing himself. On sealing his letter, he thought, she will not believe this pretext I am giving her—but she will understand, and so all is over.”

Then suddenly he felt alone in the world, quite alone, for a singularly clear vision of the life that would henceforth be his was now plainly revealed, and the glimpse of this prospect, so dreary and dark, made him shudder with grief and regret.

While his poor head was thus tormented, Bijou was showing Jean her room, saying:

“You are dreaming—I tell you you are dreaming!—he likes me as one likes a cousin—or even a sister.”

“No; one had only to look at his face when he left the drawing-room—he was quite overcome; I am sure that he is so still.”

"Would you like me to go and ask him? But, no, it is seven o'clock! we have only just time to dress. I shall come back for you, after the first bell for dinner."

"When Bijou, as ever, simply but charmingly dressed, left her room, the large corridor on the first floor was dark and silent. Every one was in their rooms dressing for the evening. The servants, who had closed the blinds, had not yet lit the lamps.

Jean, who was leaving his room, distinguished in the obscurity a white figure, which he hastened to rejoin.

"Is it you, Jean?" asked Bijou.

"Yes, it is I—and—I have a word to say to you."

"You mustn't be long, the first bell has rung."

"I won't be a minute, but I prefer that what I have to say should only be heard by yourself."

"Would you like to go in your room, or mine?"

"In yours, as we are right by the door."

Bijou opened it, and when Jean had entered she said.

"Wait—don't stir—or you'll hurt yourself. I will turn on the light."

"He seized her by the arm."

"Don't bother about the light. I can

speaking without seeing. Besides it won't take long. I want to tell you, my dear Bijou, what you did—you know, a little while ago."

She appeared to reflect.

"A little while ago. What was it that I did?"

"You kissed me—gently, oh, quite gently—but you are too old to do it—when there are others present."

"And when no one is there—then may I do it?" asked she laughingly.

And before he had time to answer she seized him by the shoulders and put up her mouth; at that moment, as he bent his head, their lips met. He uttered a low cry, while a timid and plaintive murmur from Bijou moved him so deeply that, determined to speak, he tried to draw the young girl to him, but she forced back the hands that strove to retain her, and darted out of the room, and by the swift rustling of her gown against the wall he knew that she had flown away.

## X.

ON the following day Mother Rafut arrived. Bijou had expected to keep her for a week, so she was greatly disappointed when the old seamstress informed her that she could only give her six days. The theater would be reopened on the first of September, and she would then have to resume her situation of dresser. Jeanne then proposed to help a little on the gowns, and Bijou gladly accepted the proposition.

"That's a splendid idea," said she. "If we work together, we shan't get tired; and we can talk without minding Mother Rafut."

Soon that day, while the marchioness and Madame de Rueille were engaged in making what Jean de Blaye termed "a round of visits," they installed themselves in Bijou's studio, transformed into a sewing room, and began to cut, sew and chatter, seated near the old seamstress. All at once Bijou asked:

"Are you going to the race ball?"

"Yes," said Jeanne, "it appears that as I am engaged, it isn't quite correct—but I shall go all the same, because Franz wishes to see



me in evening dress; and besides he would like to waltz with me—he waltzes very well, do you know.”

“He, with his austere air! Then, decidedly, you needn’t mind marrying a Protestant.”

“No, indeed! I am a thorough Catholic, without being a bigot, and he is a good Protestant, although no bigot. We each of us think a great deal of our religion, but neither has the slightest idea of converting the other.”

As Bijou made no reply she added:

“I am not averse to the idea of having a Protestant husband. I even confess that, from certain points of view, it reassures me. Yes, what you said yesterday is quite true—that Protestants have certain ideas, stricter principles where family life is concerned than Catholics, and besides are devoted to their wives.”

“Yes. But tell me, what dress are you going to wear to the race ball?”

“I don’t know yet. I haven’t any.”

“What! and the white one with little bouquets?”

“Papa doesn’t think it’s good enough. The race ball is going to be at the Tourvilles this year, and it will be a very fine affair.”

“Oh! yes, indeed.”

“We don’t know them at all—it will be our first visit to Tourville. If I were badly dressed,

that would be a poor compliment to your grandmother, who got us the invitations. So papa has told me to have a dress made, and he has given me fifty francs."

"What did you think of having?"

"I don't know. What would you advise?"

Bijou seemed to reflect deeply for a moment, then she said:

"If you wish, we could both be dressed alike; that would be ever so nice."

"What is your gown?"

"It doesn't exist—it is yet to be. Pink, of course, that is understood, and crêpe—quite simple with straight skirts cut like those of the ballet dancer's, without the weight of a hem—three skirts of the same length, one over the other, you understand. Three will make it sufficiently vaporous—any more would be clumsy—and forming large round *godets*; a very simple little pleated waist—little puffs with bows of ribbon and a ribbon sash, tied behind with large bows and long ends, the ribbon no wider than the hand."

"How pretty!"

"And it will be awfully becoming to you."

"But," asked Jeanne somewhat timidly, "won't you mind having my gown just like yours?"

"On the contrary, it will give me pleasure. Would you like us to make your dress here?"

I will try it on you, and then we shall be sure that it will fit."

"How sweet of you! So many other people in your place would be thinking only about themselves."

"What do you say to writing now and telling them to send the crêpe to-morrow?"

Then she added laughingly:

"I ought to have told Monsieur de Bernès, for he asked me last night if there were any shopping I would like to have done in Pont-sur-Loire."

"He would have been rather at a loss."

"But why? It isn't difficult to buy pink crêpe, with a sample."

Mother Rafut, who so far had been sewing away diligently, without saying a word, plying her needle ceaselessly with a short, quick motion, now raised her face, wrinkled as an old apple, and said:

"And even without one."

"Without what?" asked Bijou.

"Without a sample. Ah! no, indeed, he wouldn't be at a loss. He has always chosen Mademoiselle Lisette Renaud's gowns."

"Lisette Renaud, the singer?" questioned Jeanne eagerly, while Denyse, quite absorbed in her work, appeared not to have heard.

"No, mademoiselle, the *dugazon*," replied Mother Rafut.

"That is what I meant to say. Ah! Monsieur de Bernès knows her then?"

"Yes, indeed, he knows her; he has known her for more than eighteen months."

"Ah!" said Jeanne, greatly interested. "She is so pretty—Lisette Renaud. I have seen her in Mignon and also in the *Dragons de Villars*."

"Oh! yes, indeed, she is pretty. And she is good, too."

"Good?" said Mademoiselle Dubuisson, "but——"

"Ah! yes—not like yourself, certainly—but she has never looked at any one but Monsieur de Bernès, and he never looks at any one but his little Lise; but you should see how he looks at her! It is true that if he were only a superior officer, he would marry her at once, and he would be right."

"Jeanne," called Bijou, "there is the first breakfast bell."

And when they had left the room, she said, in a very gentle tone, with only a suspicion of reproach in it:

"Why do you allow Mother Rafut to tell you stories that you ought not to listen to?"

The young girl blushed, and replied with embarrassment:

"*Mon Dieu!* Her story wasn't very shocking, and besides, even admitting that it were,

how could I have prevented her from telling it?"

"Oh! very easily. All you had to do was not to answer or listen, and you would have seen then that she would have stopped talking."

"Yes, you are right."

And throwing her arms around Bijou's neck Jeanne kissed her, saying:

"You are always right. As to myself, you see, that with my serious air I am far more frivolous than you; and weaker, too. I don't know how to resist what amuses me."

"And that amused you?"

"Very much."

"*Grand Dieu!* What was there amusing about it?"

"*Dame!* I don't exactly know. To begin with, I am curious; and also observing; then this story thoroughly accounted for some things that I had previously remarked."

"But when?"

"Why, for the last four or five months—since I have been going out a little."

"What have you remarked?"

"I have observed that Mousieur de Bernès never paid attention to any woman; that he never even looked at one; that he was barely polite, even to the prettiest women; and the proof of it is, that he has never even tried to flirt with you."

"Oh! indeed no! Never!" replied Bijou laughingly, "but because he has never tried to flirt with me doesn't prove that he may not have done so with others."

"No. Mother Rafut must be right. And after all this story doesn't surprise me. You have no idea how charming Lise Renaud is; somewhat in your style, only she is taller than you, and not so blond—but her eyes are wonderful. And she has such a pretty supple figure, almost as supple as your own. In fact I can understand that whoever chanced to fall in love with her would love her with all his heart; and then she is talented, and has a lovely voice, a contralto. I am sure you would like her."

"I don't think so."

"Why not?"

"I don't care for women who act in plays, or at least for those who do it well. It is a sort of indication of duplicity."

"Oh! I don't think so. It is rather a proof of a power of adaptation, of great sensitiveness, but not of duplicity."

"Well, I don't look at it from the same point of view. Which probably doesn't prevent mademoiselle— What is her name?"

"Lise Renaud."

"Mademoiselle Lise Renaud from being a charming person, doubtless, in the eyes of Monsieur de Bernès."

"You don't like Monsieur de Bernès very much, do you?"

"Why should you think so? He is quite indifferent to me, and he appears to me a little——"

"Oh! no. I see a good deal of him at Pont-sur-Loire. He is very intelligent, awfully nice, and then he is very good looking, too. Don't you think so?"

"Didn't I tell you that I had never paid any particular attention to Monsieur de Bernès' appearance? But," added Bijou laughingly, "the next time that I see him I shall look at him with all my eyes. And I shall endeavor to discover his numerous perfections, in order to please Monsieur de Clagny."

"You think a good deal of him, don't you?"

"Of him! Oh! yes, indeed!"

"I saw that at once. From the moment that I arrived you have done nothing but talk about him, and yesterday when he came you were enchanted."

"Oh! yes, he is so kind, so lovely to me."

"But every one is lovely to you. Every one adores you."

"Everybody is altogether too good and kind to me—I know that very well—but Monsieur de Clagny is even more so than the others. I have only known him for three days, and now I cannot get on without him. Whenever I see

him I am gay and happy, and I should like to have him here all the time. Yes, I should like to have a father or an uncle like him. Wouldn't you?"

"Oh! as far as I am concerned, it would be impossible for me to think of any one but papa as a father. I adore him just as he is. Possibly papa may appear very ordinary to other people, but he is papa. Still I think Monsieur de Clagny is very nice, and he must have been charming."

"Well, for my part, I think that he is so still."

The two girls had now reached the vestibule. Jeanne walked up to the door, exclaiming:

"How warm it is!"

Then shading her eyes with her hand, she continued:

"Look! Here is a coach. Who can be coming on a coach?"

"Monsieur de Clagny, naturally," cried Bijou joyously, rushing outside; "he told grandmother that if he could get off he should come and ask her to let him breakfast with us."

"And he has succeeded," said Monsieur de Rueille sarcastically, as he was leaving the hall. "We have seen a good deal of Monsieur de Clagny for the last three days." And he added still more bitterly: "It is quite evident that he is pleased with our society."



The spectacle of the horses drawn up in front of the door, however, disarmed him, and he exclaimed in admiration:

“*Matin!* what superb horses! so beautifully handled, too. One can’t deny that the old fellow is a good whip.”

After breakfast Pierrot declared that he had a pain in his foot, and that the pain extended to the tips of his fingers. He didn’t understand what it could be.

“I understand perfectly,” said Jean de Blaye; “it’s because his shoes are too short.”

“Too short?” said Monsieur de Jonzac; “but that’s impossible.” After a moment’s reflection he added in affright: “Unless his feet should have grown still more.”

Jean began to laugh.

“That’s what they probably have done. In any case, his fingers are turned back at the end, and climbing over each other, I am sure. You have only to look at his feet to prove it. They are all lumps. They look exactly like bags of nuts.”

“I am going to make him buy some shoes to-day,” replied Monsieur de Jonzac.

“I think, uncle, that it would be better to send him to Pont-sur-Loire to be measured. There ought to be some sort of a shoemaker there.”

"Monsieur l'Abbé is just going there to take a letter to the bishop's and to get the answer," said Madame de Bracieux; "so he could very well take Pierrot with him."

"Then," said Bijou, "we could take the omnibus, and Jeanne and I could go too; we've got a lot of things to do."

"What are they?" asked the marchioness.

"Why, in the first place, we must get some *erêpe*—some *crêpe* for Jeanne; and then some paints and pencils that I need—in fact, a quantity of things."

"Would you like me to take you all?" proposed Monsieur de Clagny. "I have an appointment at three o'clock at Pont-sur-Loire, at a lawyer's. You can do your shopping and I will bring you back. It will be all on the way to La Norinière."

"Oh, what fun!" said Bijou, enraptured; "and I, who have never been on a coach! You'll let us go, won't you, grandmother?"

But Madame de Bracieux seemed to hesitate, and said:

"You'll be making yourself very conspicuous at Pont-sur-Loire, my dear Bijou, and for young girls indeed I fear that it wouldn't be altogether proper."

"Oh, grandmother!" cried Bijou, "not proper with Monsieur de Clagny?"

"Yes, with me," emphasized the count, his

face growing suddenly grave; "there is no danger; I am not compromising."

"Evidently not," replied Madame de Bra-cieux with sincerity, "but the people at Pont-sur-Loire are so ill-natured."

"Oh, grandmother," implored Bijou, "do not deprive us of a pleasure in which you see no harm, simply on account of some people at Pont-sur-Loire whom you care so little about."

"You are right. Go, then, my children, since it amuses you; and may there not be any harm, as you say, in amusing yourselves thus."

"Is there a little bit of a place for me?" asked Rueille.

"There is room for you as well as for some others," replied Monsieur de Clagny. "We are only six—so far."

"What do you say about going, to look after the little ones?" said the marchioness, turning to Bertrade.

Glancing toward her husband, who lowered his eyes and appeared to be attentively contemplating the floor, Madame de Rueille replied:

"Paul can very well look after them."

Bijou now advanced and said:

"I would like you not to leave before three o'clock, because here comes Monsieur Sylvestre, who is going to give me my lesson in accompaniments. He is walking up the avenue."

The marchioness looked out of the window and exclaimed:!

"The unfortunate man! He has come on foot in this dreadful heat."

"He always comes on foot, grandmother."

"Five kilometers—that's not such an enormous distance," said Henry de Bracieux.

"Not to you, when you are in a carriage, of course not," said Bijou, turning toward him.

"*Bah!* When one is out shooting, one walks a good deal more than that."

"But, then, when one is shooting, one is amused—that's quite different. I can tell you that if I only dared, I should always have Monsieur Sylvestre sent back in a carriage."

"If you would like to, we will take him back to-day," said Monsieur de Clagny.

"Indeed, I should like it. It is very kind of you to offer to do it, because you know he isn't particularly beautiful—my professor of accompaniments—and he won't be an ornament to your coach."

"Do you think I mind that? I am not a snob, Bijou—not in the least a snob."

"But," said Jean de Blaye, "this youth isn't so bad looking; he has exquisite eyes—wonderfully clear, with a sweet expression."

"I haven't remarked them," replied Bijou, laughing; "but even so, eyes are not particularly noticeable on the top of a coach; and he

dresses so strangely; his clothes are too tight and cling to him, and his hair is long and clinging too; he looks something like a drowned man."

"Monsieur Sylvestre is here," announced a servant.

"Have they told Josephine?" asked Madame de Bracieux.

"Yes, Madame la Marquise, Josephine is in mademoiselle's room."

Jeanne Dubuisson arose, but Bijou said:

"No, don't come. When I know that any one is there—any one but Josephine—I can't do good work." As she was going out she added: "At three o'clock I shall come back with my hat—and with Monsieur Sylvestre."

When Bijou entered her room, Josephine, the old governess, who had brought up two generations of Bracieux, was working near the window, while in the adjoining sitting-room the musician was setting up the desk and taking the violin out of the box.

At the sight of the young girl his very blue eyes became still lighter, looking extremely faint in hue in contrast with his flushed face. He was a youth of twenty-eight, very thin, awkward, and very poorly dressed, but whose face was interesting, owing to its indescribably sad and sympathetic expression.

"How warm you are, Monsieur Sylvestre!"

said Bijou, giving him her hand. "And they haven't brought you anything to drink yet!" Then, going to the door of her room, she called out: "Josephine, will you tell them to bring—? What will you take, Monsieur Sylvestre, some beer, lemonade, wine, or what? I can never remember."

"Some lemonade, if you please. But you are too kind, mademoiselle, to bother yourself about me in this way."

But Denyse interrupted him with:

"I forgot to get the music that you told me about from Pont-sur-Loire. Now you're going to scold me."

"Oh, mademoiselle!" he replied, in timid tones, "scold you? I?"

"Yes, you. If you don't scold me you are wrong. Come, what shall we play? Ah, I had forgotten! I am going to ask you first to sit down at the piano and to play my accompaniment to a stupid romance that I am learning."

"What romance?"

"*Ay Chiquita!* It's absurd, isn't it? But we have an old friend who adores it, and who has asked me to sing it for him."

"*Mon Dieu! Ay Chiquita.* It isn't actually absurd; it has become somewhat hackneyed, that is all."

"Ah!" he added, while looking at the music,

“you sing it in a high key. I should have said——”

“Yes, I sing it in an upper key. That makes it still more ugly, *Dieu!* How I should like to have a deep voice. Deep voices are so beautiful—only there aren't any.”

“They are rare, still there are some.”

Bijou shook her head.

“I have never heard any.”

“Well, still there is one that you could hear.”

“But where?”

“At the Pont-sur-Loire theater. Yes, Mademoiselle Lise Renaud, a young singer with a great deal of talent, and very pretty too—which does no harm.”

“Has she a fine voice?”

“A very fine voice, indeed. I am in the habit of hearing her about three times a week, without counting rehearsals with the orchestra. Well, I never weary of it.”

“Ah! do you know if she would sing at a soirée?”

“Why, certainly. She sings sometimes at Pont-sur-Loire.”

“I shall ask grandmother to have her here. Where does she live?”

“Rue Rabelais. I don't remember the number, but every one knows it.”

After a pause the musician asked:

"Why shouldn't you come and hear her at the theater? That would be much more interesting for you."

"Grandmother would never let me go."

"I know very well that people in society at Pont-sur-Loire do not go to the theater—it isn't considered good form—still under certain circumstances, for instance, in a fortnight a representation will be given for the benefit of the wounded—organized by the *Dames de France*—every one will go."

"And will the plays be unobjectionable?"

"Oh! yes; some opera comique or other; some solos also; and I am sure that Lise Renaud will be quite often on the programme, for she represents the best that the theater affords."

"You are not drinking, Monsieur Sylvestre," said Bijou.

She went up to the tray that had meanwhile been brought in, and proceeded to wait upon the young man herself, gracefully handing him a glass bedewed with pearly drops, caused by the contact of the icy liquid within, saying:

"Perhaps you are still too warm to drink it. This lemonade is so very cold."

He took the glass with a hand that trembled a little, and stood, with arm outstretched and half-open mouth, gazing at Bijou in passionate admiration, while she remarked smilingly:



“So, Monsieur Sylvestre, you’ve gone off again.”

The color deepened in the young man’s rosy cheeks; he at once swallowed the contents of the glass and hurrying to the piano exclaimed:

“Let us begin, mademoiselle—let us begin.”

And he ran over the very brief air of the romance, hesitating here and there, as if his fingers refused to act. It was so apparent that Denyse asked:

“What is the matter with you? Are you not feeling well to-day?”

“*Mon Dieu*, mademoiselle, I—it is so hot.”

As she was rather near-sighted, and never used a lorgnette, she leaned over him to read the notes, and at times her figure lightly touched the musician’s hair; this increased his agitation and caused his clammy fingers to slide off the keys, while Bijou repeated in surprise:

“Positively, you are not well.”

“I beg your pardon, mademoiselle, I—I—don’t know what is the matter with me.”

“Nor do I,” said she laughingly.

And as he was leaving the piano she made him sit down again, saying:

“No! if you will be so kind, I should like to try two or three other old songs.”

And she began again, leaning over so as to see better, while the unfortunate youth followed her to the best of his ability.

"When the hour was up, Bijou went in her room to get her hat, and came back to put it on before the glass in the little salon. And while Monsieur Sylvestre, instead of putting his violin back in the case, stood watching her raising her arms, and curving her rounded waist in graceful motions, she said to him:

"You must hurry—we are going to take you with us to Pont-sur-Loire, or rather Monsieur de Clagny is going to take you on his coach."

Seeing that he did not understand, she continued:

"On a large carriage that holds a great many people."

"And are you going, too?" he asked, in a dazed way.

"Yes, Monsieur Sylvestre, I am going too."

He had taken out of his box a bouquet of myosotis and hedge-roses, now faded and drooping, and timidly presented it to Bijou.

"On my way here, mademoiselle, I—I—  
took the liberty of gathering these flowers for you."

She took them, and after having deeply inhaled their perfume, she placed them in her belt, saying:

"I thank you for having thought of me."

He went downstairs, following Bijou step by step, happy, and forgetful of his misery.

And when he appeared trotting behind her, his violin case in his hand, Monsieur de Clagny said to Jean de Blaye:

"It is quite true that the musician has a good head."

The coach was just at the door when the marchioness called out:

"Bijou. I have a message to give you. Will you go to Pellerin, the publisher, and ask him for— But, no, send Pierrot to me instead."

"Pierrot," said Denyse, coming back into the vestibule, "grandmother is asking for you."

"I bet it's to do some shopping," said the boy, making a face, "and shopping's not my forte."

And while Bijou and the others were climbing up on the coach, he went off to find Madame de Bracieux.

"Were you calling me, aunt?"

"Yes. Will you go to Pellerin's? Do you know who Pellerin is?"

"The publisher?"

"Yes. Will you ask him to give you, for me, one of Dumas' novels, that which is called "Le Bâtard de Mauléon?" Why do you look at me like that?"

"Because I have never seen you read any novels, and——"

"You won't see me read this one either. It is for the curé, to whom I have promised it,

He adores Dumas, and he hasn't read "Le Bâtard de Mauléon." Will you be sure to remember the title?"

"Yes, aunt."

"Are you quite sure? Don't you want me to write it down for you?"

"It isn't worth while."

"You may forget it."

"No danger."

He rushed, head foremost, on to the coach, crushed several feet, nearly demolished Monsieur Sylvestre's violin case, and excused himself, saying:

"Ah! *Mon Dieu!* I've smashed the little coffin."

## XI.

ALWAYS up the first, Bijou went downstairs about seven o'clock, and as mistress of the mansion made a tour of inspection through the butler's pantry and the dairy.

With the exception of Pierrot, whom she sometimes encountered in the corridors, his eyes swollen with sleep, she never met any one. She was then greatly astonished on this morning to run against Monsieur de Rueille, who was leaving the library, with a book in his hand. Of all the inmates of Bracieux, he was the laziest; so she laughingly inquired:

"What! have you had enough sleep already?"

"I haven't had any as yet."

"Oh! nonsense."

"Yes, it is perfectly true; and as I had read all the old books upstairs, I came down to get another, to help me through the night."

Bijou pointed to the sun which was streaming through the open window.

"The night?" she exclaimed.

"Oh, as far as I am concerned, except in case of going shooting or of setting out on a

journey, my night lasts up to ten o'clock in the morning, at the very least."

"And are you going back to bed?"

"This very moment."

"But that's idiotic."

"On the contrary, it's most sensible. Still more so when one is not in a good humor, for the best thing to do under such circumstances is to bury oneself under the bedclothes."

"Aren't you in a good humor?"

"No."

"And why not?"

Paul de Rueille hesitated for a moment, and then replied:

"I really don't know."

"To be sure," said Bijou, laughing, "you weren't particularly amiable yesterday, during our drive to Pont-sur-Loire."

"That was all your fault."

"My fault! mine?"

"Yes, yours."

"But what do you mean?"

"Well, I'll tell you if you wish to hear."

"I do wish to hear, but not now, because they are expecting me at the dairy."

"Who is expecting you?" he inquired, with an anxious air:

"The milk-woman."

"Go at once then if that is the case. I wouldn't think of making the milk-woman wait on my account."

"You ought to come and see the eheeses," suggested Denyse.

"That would be very exciting. No! really, but aren't you afraid that I might find it too amusing? tell me, little Bijou."

"You would find it quite as amusing as lying in bed re-reading some musty old book that you must know by heart, I'm quite sure. There is nothing in the library but classics, or old fossils of tomes. Since I came here there have been no new books, either from the *Rue de l'Universits*, nor from Paris; grandmother is so afraid that I may peep inside of one, and she is quite wrong in entertaining such fears, for I would never dream of opening a book that I had been forbidden to read—never."

"Grandmother is only afraid that you would do what any other young girl would be likely to do. You are so surprising an exception, Bijou."

"Yes, I am an exception, an angel, anything you please; but either come with me, or let me go, will you? I don't like to keep people waiting."

Monsieur de Rueille laid his book down on a *console* and said:

"*Mon Dieu!* I'd like to go with you very much."

Then he proceeded to follow her, without saying anything, while Bijou walked with a

short, quick, springing step in front of him. She was so charming going about among the large pails full of milk, with her straw hat, covered with lace, perched on one side of her blond head, and with her little pink batiste wrapper caught up very high with a large silver pin.

After she had examined, ordered, and disposed of everything, without paying any more attention to her cousin than if he had never existed, then only did she turn toward him, and smilingly observe:

"And now, if you wish, we will go and take a walk. I am at your disposal." And turning into one of the paths that led to the avenues, she added: "I am listening."

"You are listening? What do you wish me to tell you?"

"I thought you wished to tell me why you were in such a bad humor yesterday; you were saying that it was all my fault."

"Because," replied he, with embarrassment, "you were—in fact, your behavior, your way of acting, was not at all what it usually is, nor what it ought to be!"

"Ah! what did I do then?"

"Why, in the first place, you insisted, so strangely, upon Bernès getting up on the coach with us, when we met him. Why did you make such a point of it?"



“*Dame!* when one meets a man on foot, a mile or so away from the place where one is going oneself, it seems quite natural to me to offer to take him there. In fact, it seems to me that it would be odd to do otherwise.”

“Agreed; but then it was Monsieur de Clagny’s place to offer him a seat on his coach.”

“He didn’t think of it.”

“Or rather he didn’t care to! You forced him to do so.”

“Come now! he adores Monsieur de Bernès; he spent half an hour the other day in singing his praises to me in every key.”

“Ah! that is probably what made you so amiable to him.”

“Was I so amiable?”

“Certainly! ordinarily you don’t pay the slightest attention to little Bernès, whereas yesterday you had only eyes for him.”

“I wasn’t aware of it.”

“Indeed! Then you were the only one who was not conscious of it—so much so that I asked myself if you weren’t doing it on purpose to torment me.”

Bijou raised her beautiful luminous eyes to Monsieur de Rueille’s face and regarding him earnestly exclaimed:

“To torment you? and pray how could I torment you by being amiable to Monsieur de Bernès?”

"How?" murmured Monsieur de Rueille, greatly embarrassed. "Why I have just told you—I am not—we are not accustomed to seeing you make such efforts—particularly where a young man is concerned. Yes, it is quite true, I was amazed, and I haven't got over it yet."

"Well, all I can say is, I am sorry that I should have annoyed you," said she sweetly.

"Yes, I assure you, you know, I have never noticed Monsieur de Bernès particularly, and I wished to see if all the fine things that Monsieur de Clagny had said to me about him were true; so then I gave him my attention. Will you forgive me?"

Without answering Monsieur de Rueille resumed:

"Your manner, where Clagny is concerned, is also objectionable. He is old, of course, but still he isn't so decrepit as to authorize such behavior."

"What do you mean by 'such behavior'?"

"Sometimes you seem to be lost in admiration before him, and sometimes you coax him in an absurd way, as you did yesterday."

"Yesterday? did I coax Monsieur de Clagny? did I?"

"You did!"

"But what was it about?"

"When you were trying your best to have

him drive the coach through Rue Rabelais—and heaven knows why, I'm sure; it's the dirtiest street there is, without taking into consideration that you might have broken all our necks—yes, indeed! It was extremely dangerous, this idea of yours; even little Bernès, who is one of the most imprudent people I know of, tried to dissuade you from going through it."

Between Bijou's lashes stole the strange little light that sometimes illumined her eyes, and smilingly she said:

"It's true; Monsieur de Bernès was furious because he could not prevent us from going through Rue Rabelais, and one would have said that he was afraid of something."

"He was afraid of being smashed to pieces, *parbleu!*—like myself—like the abbé—like Pierrot, even—and I can't understand how that old fool of a father Clagny yielded to your caprice—for he was responsible for little Dubuisson, for Pierrot, and for you, to say nothing about the rest of us."

"Have you finished scolding me?"

"I'm not scolding you."

"Ah! *par exemple!* let us make up, will you?"

Then, standing on her toes, and putting up her fresh little mouth, she exclaimed:

"Kiss me!"

He drew back quickly.

"Oh!" said Bijou, in sorrowful surprise.  
"Oh, then you don't wish to?"

Ill at ease, and at a loss for words, he replied:

"I don't wish to—I don't wish to—not here; it would be absurd. I can't understand why you don't see how absurd it would be."

Shaking her fluffy head, so that the little curls flew back from her forehead, she answered very gently:

"No, I don't think it would be in the least absurd."

Then, instead of continuing her walk, she turned back and went in without saying anything more.

On reaching his room Monsieur de Rueille found his wife awaiting him there, reading a letter that she handed to him.

"Here is a letter that I have just received from Dr. Brice," she observed; "I thought that Marcel had not been very well for some time past."

"Not very well, Marcel! that child who eats and drinks more than I do, who sleeps like a top, and grows like a mushroom. Ah! that's a pretty good joke! and what disease has the excellent Brice discovered?"

"None at all."

"That's a blessing!"

"But he has prescribed sea air."

"Sea air! for this little chap who is so overflowing with health as to be almost unbearable?"

"See what he says."

"Well, let us see what he says," murmured Monsieur de Rueille. And with an air of resignation he began to read the lengthy letter in which the doctor prescribed sea air for the little nervous troubles that the child was experiencing.

Then he repeated sarcastically:

"So Marcel has nervous troubles, and for these troubles, which no one but yourself perceives, we are to leave Bracieux, where the child is expanding in bracing air—his native air in fact—and we are to go and settle down on some stupid beach. Ah, no! sometimes you have the most unfortunate ideas."

Still irritated by his conversation with Bijou, and disturbed at the idea of not seeing her any more, he spoke in a harsh, dry tone, and tried to laugh, but his laugh had a false ring.

Bertrade regarded him attentively.

"I didn't wish," said she gently, "to tell you the truth all at once. I hoped that you would guess it. No?—haven't you any idea of it?"

"No, not the slightest," he replied, vaguely anxious.

"Well, you were right just now. Not only Marcel, but his brothers as well, are better off at Bracieux than elsewhere, for he is not ill."

As Monsieur de Rueille made a gesture of surprise, she continued gently:

"It is his father who is ill, who requires change of air, and whom it will benefit."

"Indeed! I don't know what you mean," he murmured.

"I mean to say," she replied with precision, "that you must leave Bracieux for some time. Do you wish me to tell you why?"

"I do."

"You are wrong! You know that I have never concerned myself about what you may or may not have done."

"I know that you have always been a kind and indulgent wife," said he, with conviction; "and I am very grateful."

"There is no occasion for it. I deserve no particular thanks, and I assure you that I am speaking without bitterness, or rancor, and that I should never have said anything about it if I did not now consider you very imprudent. I know very well that you are an honorable man, and that Bijou is in no danger, but I also know how captivating she is, and I can see that, after poor little Giraud, you are the one who is most seriously affected by her charms."

"Well, it is true I am affected—but, as you yourself say, there is no danger, and whether I go or stay will make no difference."

"Yes, by staying you will simply render yourself ridiculous, and probably unhappy. I speak to you as a friend; believe me, it would be better for us to go away."

"But when we come back, in two months—for we must come back in two months at the latest—things will be in exactly the same condition."

"No, it will be quite different," she replied carelessly; "in two months she will be married, or very nearly."

"Married!" said Monsieur de Rueille, amazed. "Married! is Jean going to marry her?"

"Why, no; Jean isn't going to marry her; he is another person who would do well to leave here."

"Then, if it isn't Jean I can't see—I don't suppose it can be Henry?"

"No. Henry perfectly understands that with his means he cannot marry Bijou."

"Then who is it? Who can it be?"

"Why no one in particular."

"You spoke, on the contrary, as if you were asserting a positive fact. You said 'In two months she will be married, or very nearly.' What did you mean by that? why won't you

tell me? have you been forbidden to mention it? was it told you in confidence?"

"No, it is merely a supposition on my part, I assure you, that is all."

"And you will not tell me what this supposition is?"

"No."

After a moment's silence she resumed:

"I showed grandmother the doctor's letter. Our going away makes her feel badly; she adores the children; and she likes Bracieux to be full of people."

"And so she was taken in by Marcel's nervous troubles, grandmother? That surprises me, she who is so clever?"

"If she weren't 'taken in,' as you express it, at least she let me think so. *A tout à l'heure* I am going to dress for breakfast."

Monsieur de Rueille approached his wife and said candidly:

"You are not angry with me?"

"I? And why should I be angry with you for something that you couldn't help? You are in the same condition as Jean; as Monsieur Giraud; as Henry; as the professor of accompaniments; as Pierrot; as well as of all those of whom we chance to be ignorant, without speaking of the abbé, who nowadays always appears in Bijou's company."

"Oh!"



"It is perfectly true; only he is unconscious. He feels, without knowing how or why, the charm that all experience who approach Bijou. I am very sure that he, too, will be vexed at our departure without being able to exactly explain the cause of his vexation. Hark! the bell is ringing. I shan't be ready. Go away."

"Pierrot," demanded the marchioness after breakfast, when they were all assembled in the hall, "why didn't you give me my book yesterday?"

Pierrot, who was talking with Bijou, turned around, bewildered:

"What book, aunt?"

"Dumas' novel, for the curé."

"Ah! *bon!* I had forgotten all about it."

"Did you forget my message?"

"Of course not—only Pellerin didn't have it."

"Oh! really—why he always has everything one wants."

"*Ben!* but he didn't have that, and what is more he didn't seem to know anything about the book."

"What! really?"

"Why, yes. And he's an obstinate brute. He positively refused to admit that it was by father—Machin—I've forgotten already."

"Dumas."

"Dumas—yes, that's it, and he kept on say-

ing all the time: 'I know my Dumas pretty well, and that book was never by him.' Still he promised me to search for it all the same and to send it if he found it."

"Here," said Monsieur de Rueille, who had interviewed a messenger while they were at breakfast, "here is a letter from your bookseller, grandmother. Of course he wasn't able to find it."

"Open it, Paul, will you?"

He unfolded the letter and read:

"Madame la Marquise: It is impossible to find the book that monsieur your nephew asked for. Desirous of pleasing you, we have instituted a search in the shops of our principal *confrères*, and have even telegraphed to Paris; but the answer is that '*Le Baton de Monsieur Molard*' is not nor has ever been in any bookstore."

"*Le Baton de Monsieur Molard*?" inquired the marchioness, who didn't understand, "what on earth is that?"

Then suddenly she exclaimed in amazement:

"Ah! '*Le Baton de Monsieur Molard*' is '*Le Bâtard de Mauléon*' in Pierrot's language. I was right when I wanted to write down the title, but he didn't wish me to."

Monsieur de Jonzac raised his eyes to the ceiling with a look of despair, and exclaimed, half in jest and half in earnest:

"He is incorrigible, that creature."

Blushing deeply, Pierrot replied, with vexation:

"I did my best, and besides I hardly knew what I was about yesterday. We nearly upset when we were going into Pont-sur-Loire."

"Upset?" demanded Madame de Bracieux, "upset?—what do you mean by that?"

"Because Bijou conceived the absurd idea of driving through Rue Rabelais on the coach, and Monsieur de Clagny humored her by doing it, the old fool."

"Eh! là!" said the marchioness, "please speak more respectfully of my old friend Clagny."

"He's very light-headed for his age, your old friend. He might have killed us all—without considering the row that we raised in Rue Rabelais. The coach scraped the sidewalks; the small boys ran under the horses; and the sound of the horn brought all the girls to the windows, and made them scream; but that wasn't so bad, for some of them were quite pretty—*S'pas* Paul?"

As Monsieur de Rueille, with preoccupied air, made no reply, he turned toward the abbé.

"*S'pas*, Monsieur l'Abbé?"

The Abbé Courteil answered in all sincerity:

"I don't know. I didn't notice."

But Pierrot wouldn't acknowledge himself beaten:

"*Ben!* Bijou noticed them then, no mistake about that, for didn't she stare at them though, with all her eyes."

"I?" said Bijou, her delicate face suddenly flushing, "I?—why, you are dreaming. I saw nothing. I was too much afraid."

"Afraid of what?" asked the marchioness.

"Why, of upsetting, grandmother. Pierrot was right. We nearly upset."

"He was also right when he said that your idea of driving through that miserable little street, in a coach and four, was an absurd one. How did you ever come to have such an idea?"

Bijou regarded Jeanne Dubuisson, who, with flushed face also, and eyes fixed on the ground, was listening to the discussion without taking any part in it, and then replied:

"*Mon Dieu!* I really don't remember. I think that Monsieur de Clagny was telling us that he drove his horses without a curb; that he could turn them on a plate; then as the Rue Rabelais was rather narrow and winding I said: 'I don't believe that you can drive through Rue Rabelais.'"

"That wasn't what you said at all," protested Pierrot. "This is what you said: 'Let us drive through Rue Rabelais, I should like so much to

see it,' and as he hesitated—for I must give him that much credit—you insisted with all your might."

"But," said Monsieur de Jonzac, observing that Bijou appeared irritated, "what object do you suppose your cousin could have had in driving there, rather than elsewhere?"

"I can't imagine," replied Pierrot, perplexed. Then, as a new idea suddenly seized him, he exclaimed:

"Well, there was one person there whom it didn't seem to please, and that was Monsieur de Bernès. I'm sure I don't know why, but he looked perfectly furious—*Seigneur!* how he did look!"

Henry de Bracieux burst out laughing and said:

"I know very well why he was furious,—poor Bernès! he was afraid of being scolded."

"Scolded?" asked Bijou ingenuously, her liquid eyes opening wide in surprise, while little Miss Dubuisson's pretty face, usually so placid, again grew red. "Scolded, but why?"

And as the silence deepened, and grew embarrassing, she then suggested:

"Jeanne, would you like to take a walk?"

"I am going with you," declared Pierrot.

But Bijou pushed him away, saying:

"No, we would rather be by ourselves. You would only bother us."

And going down the front steps, she said to Jeanne, who was following, somewhat discomfited:

"I know perfectly why you are so disconcerted. It is on account of your remembering that story about an actress, whose name I can't recall, and whom Monsieur de Bernès knows. As to me, I had forgotten all about it, so it didn't disturb me. Don't you see that I was right when I told you that you did wrong in listening to those stories of Mother Rafut?"

"As I said before," replied Jeanne pensively, "you are always right."

After Bijou's departure the men left the drawing-room by degrees; and as soon as she was alone with Madame de Rueille the marchioness exclaimed:

"Tell me, Bertrade, why did Paul look so strangely at breakfast?"

Not caring to either assent or prevaricate, the young woman replied:

"Did you think so?"

"Yes, and you also, and while I was looking at you both an idea occurred to me."

"Well, what was it?"

"That my little Marcel is no more ill than I am, and that the letter you showed me this morning is only a pretext to take your husband away from here. Isn't it so?"

Too straightforward to deny, she answered:

"It is true."

"Then you are jealous, and jealous of Bijou."

"I'm not jealous. Oh! no, not at all; but anxious."

"About Bijou?"

She shook her beautiful serious head, and replied:

"No, about Paul."

"Really!"

"Yes, I don't fancy the idea of his making himself utterly ridiculous."

"And did you really think, my poor Bertrade, that I hadn't observed for some time past that your husband was smitten with Bijou, like all the others? for they all of them are. And I have also remarked of late that even your abbé had lost some of his fine indifference. Don't you think so?"

"It is quite possible."

"*N'est ce pas?* I am sure that he lives a little less beatifically in the peace of the Lord."

"And the fact doesn't displease you, grandmother, now confess."

"Ah! you take a more serious view of things than I. In any case I consider your remedy of taking Paul away a mistaken one; he acts with perfect propriety; no one suspects the truth except ourselves."

"And all the others."

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"Even so; that doesn't matter, provided Bijou doesn't suspect anything."

"I—"

"Why don't you answer?"

"Because I am not of your opinion, grandmother, and you don't like people to disagree with you—particularly where Bijou is concerned."

"What do you mean by that?"

"What I have said, no more and no less."

"Then, according to you, Bijou has observed this."

"From the first day."

"Well, even so—she couldn't help it. Besides what danger does she run?"

"None."

"Paul is a man of honor."

"Of course—and even if he were not, Bijou would still be safe for many other reasons."

"What are they?"

"Well, in the first place, through her indifference. Paul, I believe, makes about as much impression upon her as a piece of furniture."

"And then?"

"And then—but—but that's all."

"You said 'for many other reasons'; you



have only given me one, let me hear the others."

"Why, no—it was only a figure of speech," replied Madame de Rueille, with some embarrassment."

"Come, now! you fib badly, my poor Bertrade. I am sure that I know what you're thinking of."

"I'm sure you don't."

"Well, now you will see. You think one of the reasons why Bijou will not pay any attention to Paul is——"

"Because he is married."

"Yes, naturally; but I am confident that you also think that Bijou is interested in some one else."

"——"

"Ah! You see. You don't answer. Yes, you think as your husband does, who said so to me two days ago; you fancy that Bijou is wild about little Giraud."

"Oh! Grandmother, what an impossible supposition. In the first place, Bijou will never be wild about any one."

"Then what do you mean?"

"Why, that she will marry reasonably, sensibly, just as she does everything."

"But when will that be?"

"When will it be? *Dame!* I don't know exactly. Soon, I think."

"Then you speak without positive knowledge. You are talking about an event in the future that is still vague."

"Ah!" replied Madame de Rueille, with a smile. "The future is always vague, grandmother."

## XII.

DURING the following week nothing was thought of but the rehearsals of the little review which was to be acted on the day after the races. The La Balues, the Juzencourts, and Madame de Nézel came to Bracieux nearly every day, as well as Monsieur de Clagny, who was wonderfully interested in the rehearsals; he acted as prompter whenever Giraud, who had accepted the position, chanced to be otherwise occupied; and seemed perfectly charmed, provided he could see Bijou act.

Father Dubuisson and Monsieur Spiegel had been there to dine several times, and Denyse, under the pretense of letting him see more of his *fiancé*, had persuaded the young professor to take a small part, in which, to tell the truth, he was execrable. Did Jeanne perceive this?

She had grown visibly sadder for some days past, and her temper, always so even, now seemed variable, while her father, amazed at seeing her constantly with her eyes full of tears, and with no apparent motive, conceived the idea that she was on the verge of some illness.

The Rueilles had not left Bracieux; Bertrade, who felt that everyone was against her, had resigned herself to the situation, gracefully giving up her determination, and patiently drifting in the current of fashion, whither, despite herself, she had been drawn.

Little Bernès came in one evening to invite the marchioness and her guests to follow a paper hunt, organized by the regiment. He was to be the fox, they were putting up splendid obstacles, and he assured them that never before had the forest been the scene of so fine a paper hunt as this was bound to be.

Bijou at once prevailed upon her grandmother to let her follow on horseback, Monsieur de Rueille and Jean de Blaye answering that no harm should befall her. Besides, like everyone who rides well, she was very prudent, never exposing herself needlessly, and knowing how to avoid accidents.

Madame de Bracieux had kept Hubert de Bernès to dinner, and during the evening she remarked to Bertrade, while looking at Denyse, who was talking with him:

“It’s rather singular, but it seems to me that Bijou doesn’t treat that little man quite as she used to. Formerly she hardly deigned to bow to him; and now, one would almost say that she was ‘gone’ on him, to use your elegant language.”

And the marchioness repeated, as if puzzled:

“Yes, her manner toward him has certainly changed.”

“And his manner toward her has also changed,” replied Madame de Reuille.

“*N'est ce pas ?* When he first used to come to Bracieux I was struck with his coldness toward that love of a child whom all the world adores. He was merely polite to her—that was all.”

“Well, even now he isn't very far gone, but he has made considerable progress. He is preparing to follow in the footsteps of his predecessors.”

Looking at Madame de Rueille, the marchioness demanded:

“When you spoke to me not long ago about Bijou's marriage, did you have any particular idea in your head?”

Without answering, Bertrade repeated the question:

“Any particular idea in my head?”

“Yes; did you think, for instance, that Bijou cared for little Bernès?”

“I told you that day, grandmother, that I thought that Bijou didn't care, has never cared, and never will care, for anybody.”

“If you had said that to me as you now say it I should have certainly contradicted you.

It is impossible, in my opinion, to be more completely mistaken about her than you are. Not care for any person? Bijou?—when there is no one in the world who has so much need of caresses and affection.”

“She needs caresses and affection. Yes, that’s quite evident; that is to say, she requires some one to lavish caresses and affection upon her, but she has no desire to reciprocate such demonstrations.”

“In other words, her nature is a cold and selfish one,” said the marchioness, whose voice suddenly hardened. “Really, Bertrade, you are vexed with Bijou for her charm. You are annoyed with her because no one can resist a charm so infinite; and instead of being angry with Paul, who is the true culprit, you most unfairly blame this little creature.”

“I do not blame Bijou any more than I do Paul, grandmother,” replied Madame de Rueille, very gently. “I blame them still less, as I do not believe much in free will. Yes, I understand perfectly that I shock you greatly by such a confession. You think that I am sacrilegious, do you not? And yet, God knows that these reflections to which I sometimes yield do but render me more indulgent.”

“What are you two conspiring about in this little corner?” demanded Monsieur de Clagny, who now approached them.



*Monsieur l'Abbé.*

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"Nothing," said Madame de Bracieux. "We were only looking at Bijou, who appears to be engaged in thawing out your little friend, Bernès."

The count turned around with anxious air.

"Thawing out? What do you mean by that?"

"*Dame!* what is always understood. When this young man dined with us eight days ago his manners were simply freezing. Well, I think that a thaw is now approaching."

"Nonsense," cried Monsieur de Clagny, his face suddenly clearing. "I had forgotten that he had an attachment or some one—in fact so strong an attachment that he even wishes to marry the girl, which, as you can well imagine, doesn't particularly please his father." Then he added, in an absent-minded way: "Oh! as far as he's concerned, I'm quite easy."

"Easy?" questioned Madame de Bracieux, in astonishment. "But why do you say that? Do you object to Bijou marrying Monsieur de Bernès, and if so, pray why?"

"Because she is so young," he murmured, with some embarrassment.

"How so young? Why, she is beyond the age when one usually marries. Bijou will be twenty-two in the month of November."

"Then Hubert is too young for her; he's only a boy."

"I should certainly prefer to see her married to a rather more mature man; but in case he suits her he has a good name, a fine fortune. Why not be as well as another?"

"Do you really think that Bijou likes him?" asked Monsieur de Clagny anxiously.

"I don't know anything about it," said the marchioness, laughing; "but in what earthly way does it concern you? Now, I can very well understand why it should worry Jean and Henry, but you?" As he said nothing, she resumed: "It is the story of the dog in the manger—he can't eat the hay himself, and he doesn't wish any one else to eat it. That is exactly your case, my poor friend; for, in fact, I don't suppose you have any idea of marrying Bijou yourself, have you?"

Though his face grew grave, he replied in a jesting tone:

"Oh! as to me, I might very well have that idea, you know, but as Bijou wouldn't, then it comes to the same thing in the end."

Bijou now approached them, gliding along with her usual light elastic tread, and followed by little Bernès, who in tones of disappointment was asserting:

"I cannot, mademoiselle, I assure you that I cannot leave my comrades on that day."

"But you must! *N'est ce pas?* Grandmother, mustn't Monsieur de Bernès come to

dinner at Bracieux on the day of the paper hunt? He is going to be the fox, and the rally cry, it appears, will be at Cinq Tranches, not more than a mile from here."

Madame de Bracieux examined the little officer attentively, with an air of benevolence, and replied:

"Why, certainly, he must come and dine at Bracieux—it will give us all so much pleasure."

"You are a thousand times too good, to wish to have me—but I was just explaining to Mademoiselle de Courtaix, that on that day, after the paper hunt that the regiment offers to all the neighborhood, I had made an engagement to dine with a number of my comrades."

Then regarding Bijou, in spite of himself, he added:

"And I regret it—more than I can say!"

Whirling around on her high heels, Bijou had already flown away to the other end of the hall. She was badly received by Perriot, who said, with bitterness:

"You've played us a mean trick, do you know?"

And as Monsieur de Jonzac, who, while he was playing billiards with the abbé, was also listening with one ear to the conversation that was going on about him, protested against this

manner of expressing a reproach, otherwise sufficiently just, Pierrot replied firmly:

“It’s perfectly true! I’m not precisely a purist, but that doesn’t prevent what I said from being true—nor the others from having said the same thing, as they did just now. I wasn’t the only one.”

“Mademoiselle,” said Giraud, who was looking out of the large bay window, “you were saying yesterday that you liked shooting stars—well, I have never seen so many as this evening.”

“Indeed,” said Denyse, going over and sitting down beside the tutor, “are there so many as all that?”

Then leaning over, she asked:

“What is that on the left? I see something white on the terrace.”

“It is Mademoiselle Dubnission who is walking with her father and Monsieur Spiegel.”

“Ah! Suppose we go and join them. Would you like to?”

Giraud sprang up, delighted to walk with Bijou on such a beautiful starry night, and they went out together.

As soon as they were on the terrace, she asked:

“Don’t you think it rather inconsiderate, and that perhaps we may annoy them if we

interrupt a family conversation? Let us walk under the chestnuts, they can join us if they wish."

She went down the marble steps, and penetrated into the profound gloom of the group of chestnut trees. The young man followed her, step by step, with a bounding heart, mad with joy, but inwardly ill at ease. They walked on for some time without saying a word. After a while Bijou exclaimed, raising her head to catch a glimpse of the sky between the trees:

"We won't see many shooting stars here!"

Desirous of not leaving this dark corner, where he felt so near her. Giraud replied:

"Why, yes—one can see them just as well. Look—there is one—didn't you see it?"

"Scarcely! and not long enough to make a wish."

"To make a wish—and for what?"

"Oh, no matter for what! Why, didn't you know that whenever one sees a shooting star, one must make a wish?"

"No, I didn't know it! and is it ever fulfilled?"

"They say so."

"Have you thought of a wish, mademoiselle, so that the next time you will be prepared?"

"Yes, certainly, I have thought of one, but it can never be realized."

"Ah! I don't dare to ask you."

"I should like to be quite another person," said she gently. "Yes, a very pretty young girl, in a humble condition—one who could live afar from the world, and who could marry whom she pleased; in short, be happy in her own way, without regard to prejudices or social distinctions."

"Why would you like that?" he asked, with a trembling voice.

"So that I would have a right to love the one who loves me; that is, to love him openly, without concealment," and she added in a very low tone, "without self-condemnation."

She was walking close beside him, so close that their shoulders touched at each step. Giraud, quite overcome, murmured:

"You say that as if—as if you did like some one!"

He divined that she had turned her face toward him, but she did not answer. At that moment an owl perched quite near them uttered a mournful and anxious cry that frightened Bijou. She jumped aside, falling against Giraud, who received her in his arms.

And when her soft perfumed hair touched his lips, he lost his head, and forgetting all that separated him from the young girl, and pressing her madly in his arms, he murmured:

"Denyse!"

She let him go on, without defending her-

self, but when he had released her, in tender, plaintive tones she cried:

"Oh! it was wrong of you to do that, very wrong!"

Then she hid her face in her hands, and he could hear her weeping.

He strove to speak to her, and wished to kneel down before her, but she pushed him away, exclaiming:

"No! leave me! You must go so that the people out there can see you. I will return in a moment, when I feel a little better."

Then as he was going back by way of the terrace, she called him, saying:

"Not that way; go round by the pool; don't let it appear that you were coming from here."

"Let me again beg your pardon; permit me to kiss those little hands that I adore."

"Go away! go away!" she replied, as if afraid of herself.

Before turning into the foot-path that led to the pool, Giraud paused, striving to catch one last glimpse of Bijou's light gown amid the encircling gloom; and listening, as he paused, he heard her weeping still.

"Is it you, Bijou?" asked Jean de Blaye, advancing in the deep shadows. The young girl drew herself up and exclaimed:

"Who is it?"

"It is I—Jean. What? you don't even pay me the compliment of knowing my voice. What are you doing here, in the dark?"

"I am taking a walk."

"All by yourself?"

"I came out to walk with the Dubuissos, but then I thought it was better not to bother them, so I came here—all by myself, as you say."

"It must be rather a change for you, *hein*? What in the world can you find to do when you are by yourself?"

"I was reflecting."

"Oh! what a large word."

"I was dreaming, then, if that suits you any better."

"Ah! indeed, that's something that I can scarcely credit. Your dreams must be quite different from ordinary ones."

"But why?"

"Because dreams are usually incoherent, disconnected, irregular, and improbable."

"Very well?"

"Well, your dreams must be admirably adjusted ones, well-weighed. They ought to resemble yourself."

"Thank you."

"For what?"

"*Dame!* for the nice things that you are saying to me."



"Oh! they are not nice, I know, but they are quite true. Besides I am not here to say nice things to you, but serious ones."

"Serious?"

"Yes, I have been requested to fulfill a mission which concerns yourself—to speak, to the best of my ability, in the name of one who has not dared to speak for himself."

"And who is this person?"

"Henry. He has begged me to find out if you will authorize him to ask grandmother for your hand."

"My hand? Henry?" she exclaimed in accents that expressed amazement.

"*Mon Dieu!* yes; is that anything so extraordinary?"

"*Dame!* yes; Henry—wh. Henry is just like my brother."

"Well, in point of fact he isn't, consequently let us not regard him in the light of a brother, but in that of a suitor. What is your answer?"

"My answer? In the first place, why does Henry address himself to me, instead of asking grandmother permission to speak to me? He should have asked grandmother's permission to speak to me."

"*Hein!* didn't I say that you were an admirably poised and correct little creature, and all that it implies?"

"That is unkind."

"Oh! no, it isn't unkind; on the contrary, it is only embarrassing. Tell me now, was I to blame in speaking to you first? or must I readjust matters by addressing grandmother, who will then address you?—etc., etc."

"No, I will give my answer to you."

"Then permit me to conclude my little speech—Count Henry de Bracieux, born on the twenty-second of January, 1870, has for his entire fortune, up to the death of his grandmother, six hundred thousand francs, which brings him in about——"

"Oh! it isn't worth while to go over money matters with me, for, as I don't wish to marry Henry, it is quite useless to tell me all that."

"Ah! you don't wish to marry him; but why not?"

"For many reasons; and the best one is, that I know him too well."

"That is not a very flattering reason."

"I mean exactly what I have just said, and that is, that living in the same house with Henry, as I have done for the last four years, I look upon him as a brother."

In a tone that he endeavored to render indifferent, Jean de Blaye demanded:

"So, then, I suppose you also look upon me as a brother?"

"You! oh, no, not at all. You are at least thirty-five years old."

"No; thirty-three."

"Ah! is that all. Well, all the same, you don't seem to me like a brother."

She reflected a moment, while he awaited her reply with a sort of vague hope, and then she concluded thus:

"You seem to me more like an uncle."

"Ah!" said Jean, in vexation, "that is delightful."

"Does it displease you to have me say that?" said she gently.

"Oh! not in the least. It pleases me, on the contrary. *A la bonne heure?* With you, at least, there can be no mistake, and then, if one has any illusions they are quickly dispelled."

"Have you had any illusions? What are they?"

"I haven't had any."

"Yes, you have. I can tell by your voice. It is bitter, cutting, irritable."

Then gently pressing his arm, she asked coaxingly:

"Tell me why you are so cross, all of a sudden?"

He drew back and replied:

"Because when one is not very good, and when one is vexed, then one becomes disagreeable—it is inevitable."

"And are you vexed?"

"Yes."

"Very much?"

"Why, quite enough, thank you."

"My poor Jean! things are not going, then, as you wish."

"What do you mean? What are you talking about?"

"Of—but you know very well. I told you the other evening."

"What, again," he replied, growing more and more nervous; "oh! as to that you are crazy."

"What?" said Bijou, "are you not in love with Madame de Nézel?"

"Madame de Nézel is a charming woman," he murmured, embarrassed, "an excellent friend, whom I like very much—very much indeed—but not in the way you imagine."

"Ah! so much the worse. She is a widow, and she is rich. She would have just suited you. Then you care for some one else?"

"Yes."

"Some one whom you can't marry?"

"Precisely."

"Why, isn't she rich enough?"

"Oh, yes; if she had nothing at all it would be all the same to me; it is I who am not rich enough for her, and then besides she wouldn't have me."

"You don't know anything about it. You ought to tell her that you like her."

“Do you think so?”

“Certainly, one should always try.”

“Well, Bijou, I love you like a fool, like an unhappy wretch who hopes for nothing and who doesn't even dare to ask for your love in return.”

She stopped short and said in heartbroken tones:

“You love me—you—you?”

“Yes, and you—you hate me, don't you?”

“Oh, Jean, how can you say such a thing? You know on the contrary, that I like you very much—not as you would care to have me, not as I should like to myself, but very much, all the same, very much indeed!”

She leaned on his shoulder, compelling him to stop, and then rapidly pressing her hand over his eyes exclaimed, in a sorrowful tone:

“You are crying, and I am the cause. Jean! Jean! I don't want you to cry, do you hear?”

He took the little hand that was smoothing his face in his, and pressed upon it a long and burning kiss; then as she clung to him, he gently disengaged himself and walked rapidly away.

## XIII.

"THEN you wish to go away positively," said Bijou with vexation to Jeanne Dubuisson, who was folding her gowns in the drawer of a long basket trunk.

The young girl, very much absorbed in her work and without raising her head, replied:

"Yes, I have been here too long already; it would be inconsiderate for me to stay longer, you understand."

"You know very well that isn't so; besides it was almost decided that you should stay till Monday, and then all of a sudden you changed your mind. What was your reason for doing so?"

"Why, there wasn't any. What reason did you suppose that I had?"

"If I knew I shouldn't ask you. Let me see—what could it possibly have been? You haven't appeared to be bored."

"Oh, Bijou, how could you even think of such a thing!"

"*Dame*, it might have been the case. On the other hand, you see almost as much of your *fiancé* as if you were at Pont-sur-Loire"

"Oh, no!"

"Oh, yes! Come, let's count up: Monsieur Spiegel spent Saturday, Sunday and Monday at Paris; on Tuesday he came and dined here with Monsieur Dubuisson; Wednesday he came by himself; Thursday he partook of the confirmation breakfast—the poor man; on Friday he dined here, and on each of these days we have rehearsed the review, either before or after dinner, which proves that he has never left you."

"That is true," replied Jeanne, with an effort: "but if he has never left me, he has had nothing to do with me."

"How could that be?"

"How? Oh, it is quite simple; he has devoted himself entirely to you; he has spoken to no one but you."

"To me?"

"Yes, to you. Come, I prefer to confess it: my Bijou, I am jealous, frightfully jealous!"

"Jealous of whom?—of me?" demanded Denyse in amazement:

Mademoiselle Dubuisson made a sign of affirmation. Then, while the tears sprang to her eyes, she continued.

"I beg your pardon for saying this to you, for I can perfectly well see that I am giving you pain; but it was better, was it not, to tell the truth than to let you imagine other things. You are not angry with me?"

"No, not at all." Then she added sadly: "It is you who ought to be vexed with me; but you are mistaken, I assure you. Monsieur Spiegel, who is very polite, has paid me some attention because I am the granddaughter of my grandmother, in whose house he has been entertained, and for no other reason."

"He has been attentive to you for the same reason that every one else is—because you are adorable—you know it quite well."

"Why no, I——"

"I might have known that he would be influenced by your charm, as every one is. I was a simpleton not to foresee what has come to pass. I counted so much on his affection for me. I thought that he loved me as I loved him. I was mistaken, that is all."

"Then I shall see no more of you? You will avoid all occasions of coming near me?"

"No, for we are going to spend the day together at the paper hunt."

"As you will be in a carriage, and I on horseback, I shan't trouble you much."

Bijou remained silent for a moment, then she inquired anxiously:

"At least you don't think that what has happened is my fault?"

"No," said Jeanne, "I only think that you are a charming girl, and that I am an ordinary one. I beg of you, my dear Bijou, don't let this worry you."



"I shall be so unhappy not to see anything more of you."

"But you will see me. I am coming back for the review the day after to-morrow; we will have to do so, as Monsieur Spiegel and I are both taking part in it."

"Why do you say 'Monsieur Spiegel?' Why don't you say Frantz, as you always used to do? Are you angry with him?"

"On Saturday," continued Jeanne, without answering Bijou's question, "we shall see each other at the races; on Sunday at the races again, and in the evening at the Tourville's ball, so you see that we shall be constantly together."

"Still," replied Bijou, with a mournful air, "it won't be at all the same as if you were staying here. I cannot help feeling that you are going away with some grudge against me."

"Madame la Marquise wishes Mademoiselle Denyse to go to the drawing-room," said the maid, who was standing at the door.

"In the drawing-room at this hour of the day?" said Bijou in surprise.

"Monsieur le Comte de Clagny is there."

"Ah! very well; say that I am coming at once."

Then, turning to Mademoiselle Dubuisson, she proposed:

"Come with me."

"No, I want to finish packing my trunk, as it must be sent to Pont-sur-Loire after breakfast."

A quarter of an hour afterward Bijou came back, jumping for joy and crying:

"Oh! you don't know! We are going to spend the evening together."

"Where?"

"Guess."

"How can I tell! at the theater?"

"Right! How did you know?"

"Because you have repeatedly said in Monsieur de Clagny's presence that you would like to go to this representation given by the *Dames de France*. I suppose he bought you a box?"

"Two boxes. Yes, just imagine!—two beautiful large proscenium boxes, each one holding six. So we at once arranged with your father that you should come. Monsieur Spiegel too, that's understood—because I forgot to tell you—they are both here, your father and Monsieur Spiegel. Monsieur de Clagny brought them over."

"But," said Jeanne, "if we are three it will bore you."

"Come, now, didn't I tell you that there were twelve seats? Grandmother and myself, that makes two—and you three, that makes

five—that leaves seven seats, and no one cares to go.”

“The Rueille?”

“Paul, but not Bertrade, that makes six. Neither Jean nor Henry are going, neither is Uncle Alexis, and Pierrot has been punished. There is Monsieur de Clagny, and I intend to offer a seat to Monsieur Giraud, so that makes eight altogether.”

As Mademoiselle Dubuisson said nothing, she continued:

“Then you don’t care about spending the evening with us—or rather with me. Are you trying to think of some excuse?”

“Why, no. I’m not trying to think of any—besides, as you have arranged with papa.”

“Yes, it’s all arranged. I have also asked Monsieur de Bernès, but he pretends that he cannot accept, as he is going with some friends.”

“But where did you see Monsieur de Bernès?”

“In the drawing-room, just this minute. Ah! it is true you didn’t know! he came to bring Monsieur Giraud’s invitation; Jean had written to ask him for one, because Monsieur Giraud was anxious to go; he has never seen a paper hunt, and as there is to be a breakfast given by the officers, grandmother is so particular that she wouldn’t take him without an invitation.”

"Then Monsieur de Bernès is breakfasting here also?"

"No, he has left; he is to be the fox, and the meeting will be at three o'clock at the crossroads *du Roy*. It is very near for us, but for those who are going from Pont-sur-Loire it is quite a step."

"At what time do we leave?"

"The carriages leave at half-past two, those on horseback at a quarter-past two. Oh! I say! I've a mind to dress now before breakfast, so that I shan't have to think about it again."

"You have still half an hour."

"As you are all ready will you come and stay with me while I am dressing?"

Jeanne submissively followed Bijou, who ran singing through the corridors.

"You are always gay," said Jeanne, "but this morning I find you particularly joyful. What is the reason?"

"Why, there isn't any. I am delighted with the prospect of the hunt, the theater—the day is fine, the sky is blue, the flowers fresh, and it is a pleasure to be alive, but that is all."

"Still that is something."

"Sit down," said Bijou, pushing Made-moiselle Dubuisson into a large Louis XVI. *bergère*. The young girl seated herself and attentively regarded the room that was all in

pink. The walls and ceiling were hung in pale pink crétonne, over which strayed graceful sprays of huge white poppies; while the Louis XVI. furniture was all of pink enamel; and flowers everywhere, in crystal vases of strange distorted form; the atmosphere redolent with a delightful but penetrating and uncertain odor, a sort of mixture of *chypre*, of iris, and of new-mown hay.

Jeanne inhaled the aroma that she so much liked and asked:

“What do you use in your room that gives it this perfume?”

Deeply inhaling the air around her, Bijou replied:

“Do you observe any perfume? Why, I don't, and in any case I never use any.”

“Oh!” said Jeanne in surprise, “why that's incredible. What! do you really mean that you never use any?”

“Positively never.”

Denyse now went walking up and down the room, engaged in the process of investing her pretty little person in divers accompaniments to her riding suit, preliminary to donning her habit. Then seating herself on the side of the bed, she proceeded to draw on her flexible yellow leather boots, that admirably defined her exquisite feet.

While she was standing before a *psyché*,

putting the finishing touches to her toilette, Jeanne gazed at her with admiring interest and murmured:

"How beautifully that habit fits you? it looks as if you were moulded in it; it is really quite perfect. But then you have such a pretty figure."

Denyse was trying hard to push a pearl pin into her white scarf, when the point of the pin snapped off.

"Oh!" said Jeanne, "what a pity!"

"*Bah*," replied Bijou, "it was no good. Now if I win the bet that I made with Monsieur de Bernès, with choice of stakes, I shall ask him to give me a strong one. And one that doesn't cost much," she added, laughing, "so that it won't look like a present."

"Did you make a bet with Monsieur de Bernès?"

"Yes."

"With choice of stakes?"

"Yes, was it wrong?"

"Wrong? well, no; but rather a strange thing to do."

"Come now! you're just like grandmother; she was quite scandalized."

"*Dame!* and what was your bet with Monsieur de Bernès?"

"I bet that there would be at least *one* accident at the paper hunt, and he bet that there wouldn't be any at all."

"But it is very possible."

"No, it isn't very possible. There are always some accidents; this would be the first hunt without one. I want you to understand that I mean even if it should only be a fall—a harmless little tumble—should any one fall, and be picked up. I don't mean to predict that any one will be killed, do you understand me?"

"Don't go and fall yourself, at least."

"Oh! as far as I am concerned," said Bijou, her eyes shining with merriment, "there is no danger. Patatras has never been so firm on his feet."

When, at a quarter-past two, punctual as ever, Bijou appeared at the front door, she found Henry de Bracieux, Jean de Blaye and Pierrot there; but Monsieur de Rueille had not yet come down. The horses who had already been kept waiting for a minute or two had grown restive, annoyed by the flies. Patatras alone was perfectly quiet, champing his bit, and gazing peacefully about him.

"Don't wait for Paul; he's only just beginning to dress," said Bertrade, opening a window; "he will join you later on."

"Would you like us to start now, Bijou?" suggested Jean.

"I'm almost inclined to let you start without me," she replied hesitatingly.

"Your three horses are going on like mad. They will excite Patatras, who is only disposed to be peaceful. Go on and I will rejoin you over there. Nothing irritates me so much as to ride a horse that pulls my arms out of the sockets, and that is what would surely happen if I started off with you."

"So, then," demanded Henry, with a sneer, "you are going to wait for Paul."

Bijou pointed to the carriages that were just leaving the stable yard, and said:

"No, I am going to escort grandmother; I prefer to do that."

"Well, if you do," said Jean de Blaye, "it will be sure to excite your horse."

"Why, no, it won't. I think I ought to know my own horse. So then all I ask of you is to go on and not concern yourself about me."

"How charming you are!" said Pierrot, turning away, and going up to his pony. Then addressing the others, he added, with an air of majesty and vexation:

"Let us leave her, as she doesn't seem to wish to go with us."

Jean, who was mounting his horse, replied, half in jest and half in earnest:

"Well, I should say there was nothing else to do."

As they all three disappeared at the turn of the road, Monsieur de Clagny came



out of the vestibule—he wanted to see if the horses had been properly harnessed—and was amazed and surprised to find Bijou there.

“How lovely you are in that red habit!” said he, quite dazzled; “usually red makes one look pale, but as to you, if possible, it even renders you rosier.”

When he learned that the young girl intended to accompany the carriages as far as the rendezvous, he was quite happy.

The marchioness now arrived, followed by all her guests, and got into the landau with the Dubuissos and Monsieur Spiegel. Monsieur de Clagny took Madame de Rueille, the children, the Abbé Courteil, and Monsieur de Jonzac on his coach; as to Monsieur Giraud he was so hypnotized by Bijou, who was waiting on horseback, ready to start, that he nearly fell off the coach in trying to gain his seat.

So they set out under a scorching sun. Monsieur de Clagny, much more interested in Denyse than in the four horses that he was driving, gazed at her trotting on in front beside the marchioness' carriage.

It was the first time that he had ever seen her on horseback, and she seemed to him incomparably pretty and distinguished. While he was thus regarding her with singular attention, Madame de Bracieux's voice could be heard from the landau:

"What a fearful heat, my dear Bijou! I don't like to see you out there in the sun like that."

Denyse turned around, showing a flushed face, and replied:

"Neither do I, grandmother; I don't like the idea of it myself."

Then, after a moment's reflection, she continued:

"So whenever we find Jean, Henry, and Pierrot I shall leave you."

"But do you think that we shall find them?"

"Oh, surely. They are following, in the woods, almost the same route that we are taking in the carriage. They are only twelve or fifteen yards from us; I have already heard them. As soon as I see them I shall leave you."

Monsieur de Clagny called out to Bijou in order to give her a thousand instructions. She must be very careful about the branches going through the thickets. On that very morning, even, he had been nearly thrown out of his saddle while galloping under the branches. And she must also look out for rabbit holes; the woods were full of them. And she mustn't leap in a group—never; she must either lead or stay behind.

She listened smilingly to his advice, with affectionate and amiable deference. Finally he concluded with:

"How good you are, Bijou, not to turn a deaf ear to the old friend who is boring you."

At this moment, about two hundred yards in front of the carriage, a horseman crossed the road and entered the forest, and the count continued:

"Ah! there is Bernès scattering the pieces of paper; he has adopted the right method, which is to make the circuit in an inverse sense while dropping the bits of paper; after that there is nothing to do but to run, without bothering about anything."

"What time is it?"

"Twenty minutes to three," said Bertrade, looking at her watch. "We are going to reach the rendezvous much too soon."

Monsieur de Clagny brought the horses down to a trot. Bijou had ridden up to the landau and was talking to Jeanne. Suddenly she leaned forward as if to listen, and exclaimed:

"Ah! there they are; I can hear them."

"Who do you mean?" asked the marchioness.

"Why, the others; they are there. I am going to find them. *Au revoir*, grandmother."

She leaped the ditch by the roadside, then pausing, and kissing her hand to Jeanne, cried:

"*Au revoir* to you too."

But the landau was already at some distance, and the coach was just passing. Giraud on the back seat, with Pierrot and the children, was

the only one looking in Bijou's direction, and he it was who received the sweet adieu that she had addressed to her friend.

"Are you sure you will find them?" asked the count, turning around on his seat.

"Why, there they are—ten yards off. I just now saw Henry."

And she disappeared in the thick shadows of the forest, while Monsieur de Clagny followed her with anxious eyes.

As soon as she had succeeded in finding a path Bijou began to gallop, going straight ahead, her ear on the alert, and her glance piercing far into the depths of the forest.

Then, all of a sudden, she made a quick turn into the underbrush, where she remained, trying to prevent Patatras, to the best of her ability, from trampling the dead branches under his feet.

Henry de Bracieux, Jean de Blaye, and Pierrot now made their appearance on the path that she had just abandoned, and paused almost on a level with the spot where Denyse was concealed, to await a horse that they heard galloping not far off. When Monsieur de Rueille appeared Henry demanded:

"What were you doing all this time? We saw you ten minutes ago at the end of the Belles-Feuilles road."

Without answering, Monsieur de Rueille said anxiously:

"Where is Bijou?"

"She deserted us to go with the carriages," replied Pierrot contemptuously.

"Ah!" said Rueille, in a tone of disappointment. Then, turning toward his brother-in-law, he replied: "What was I doing? I stopped for a moment to say good-morning to Bernès, who was talking to his little singer. She has come in a cab, and has stopped in an out-of-the-way corner, where no one would be likely to see her, simply to catch a three-minute glimpse of Bernès. They can't go a day without seeing each other, and I can tell you she's very pretty—that little girl."

"Yes," said Jean de Blaye, "and gentle as a dove, and well educated."

"Well, that I didn't know."

"Now that your horse has had time to breathe, Paul, we may as well go on, if we don't wish to miss the start."

"Yes," said Monsieur de Rueille, resuming his trot, "but we have plenty of time. Bernès is right behind me."

As soon as they had disappeared Bijou came back to the path. Her complexion was extraordinarily brilliant, and her eyes shone with the intensely blue flame that at times rendered their expression, usually so gentle, unpleasant to behold.

After Monsieur de Rucille's departure, Hubert de Bernès had remained for a moment to talk with Lisette Renaud.

"Then it's all arranged," said the little singer.

"Notwithstanding your dinner, you will come early to the theater?"

"Yes."

"And you will probably stay in my box?"

"No; I must go into the auditorium."

"What! you who can't bear *La Vivandière*; and I can very well understand it too. You are going to see it again?"

When Bijou had invited Bernès to come to her grandmother's box, he had refused, knowing well that it would make Lisette feel badly to see him there. Mademoiselle de Courtaix was very well known at Pont-sur-Loire, and greatly admired by the women of fashion, and by the actresses who alike copied her toilettes and envied her charm, which was generally regarded as irresistible.

For several days past the little lieutenant was aware that he likewise was subject to this charm. His love for Lisette had hitherto acted as a safeguard. He loved this faithful and devoted little creature with all his heart—Lisette, who had never accepted anything from him but flowers, or inexpensive souvenirs, and who, although her income derived from the

Pont-sur-Loire theater was only eight hundred francs a month, had distinctly declared that she would receive no valuable gift; and he very well knew that any persuasion to the contrary would have simply irritated her, and resulted in a separation. But it was even possible that he loved the young woman more for her delicate soul, and exquisite heart, than for her pure and girlish beauty; a beauty without brilliancy, but genuine, captivating and rare, and which affected him with a sense of gentle, restful happiness. And now since he had paid some attention to Bijou, whom heretofore he had never observed, he had experienced strong sensations that he could neither resist nor account for. In vain did he repeat to himself that Lisette, with her large, kind, beautiful eyes, her fine, fresh skin, her brilliant teeth and her graceful, distinguished form, was prettier than Mademoiselle de Courtaix; it was Bijou's forget-me-not eyes, curling locks, and tempting mouth that were calculated to inspire, so it seemed to him, tender caresses and mad kisses. Lisette, without suspecting yet that her happiness was threatened, nevertheless was conscious of a certain feeling of anxiety that saddened her heart. She could not understand why Bernès should reply so coldly to her question.

“I am going to see *La Vivandière* again,

because, in order to refuse a seat that has been offered me in a box, I have been compelled to say that I had promised to go to the theater with my comrades."

"Ah! who has offered you a seat?"

"An old lady whom you don't know—Madame de Bracieux. Now you are much wiser, aren't you?"

"Madame de Bracieux," replied she sadly, without knowing why; "she is the grandmother of Mademoiselle de Courtaix."

"How did you know that?" he asked in surprise.

"Why—just as every one knows it in Pont-sur-Loire."

"Meanwhile," said he irritably, "I am going to miss the rendezvous."

"Go, then," said Lisette, with regret, "and enjoy yourself—*à ce soir*."

"*A ce soir !*"

Just as he was entering the woods, he called out, turning around in his saddle:

"Above all, take care that no one sees you. Don't go where the carriages are."

Then striking into the bridle-path that Bijou had just taken, he urged his horse into a swift hunting gallop in order to make up for lost time. Suddenly he stopped, striving to distinguish something in the distance.

"Ah!" said he to himself, "a horse without a



rider; some man must have been thrown already."

As he approached he saw that the horse had on a woman's saddle, and he gave a cry on perceiving Bijou lying on her back, in the grass on the side of the path. One of her arms was lying across her chest, while the other fell by her side. Her eyes were closed and her lips half-open. Bernès leaped to the ground and secured his horse; then, taking Denyse in his arms, he tried to arrange her in a more comfortable position with her back against a tree.

But when he saw her head fall lifelessly on his shoulder, he enfolded her in his arms, and in his excitement leaned over her, covering her pretty curling locks with kisses and repeating, in spite of himself:

"Bijou, my Bijou, won't you hear me? Answer me, I pray you! It makes me so unhappy to see you like this."

At the end of two or three minutes Denyse gave a gentle sigh and slowly opened her eyes. At the sight of Bernès her solemn face grew smiling:

"Ah!" murmured she, "what a stupid tumble."

"How did you happen to fall?" he asked.

"I don't know. I think my horse must have put his foot in a hole."

"Oh! and then you went head over heels."

"Your description is right," replied she laughingly.

"Have you hurt yourself?"

"Not the least bit."

Then she added pensively:

"It is very nice of you to concern yourself about me, and so much more, as I believe you don't care for me."

Hubert de Bernès grew red as a beet, exclaiming:

"Où! mademoiselle! can you believe that?"

"I do believe it, yes; perfectly."

"But at least," he demanded in astonishment, "tell me what ever could have made you think of such a thing?"

"Oh, everything and nothing. It would take too long to tell. Oh, this morning, for instance, when I begged you to come to the theater with us, you looked quite overcome, and you refused—ah, indeed, you did—pretty flatly—and why did you?"

"But mademoiselle, I—I assure you——"

"You see, you can't find a word to say—not even some trivial excuse."

Shaking back her hair, which fell over the young man's cheek and shoulder, she said, laughing merrily, without ceasing to lean on him as if he were an easy-chair:

"But it's all the same to me, for, whether you wish to or not, you will go with us to the theater. You can't refuse."

"But——"

"There is no but! I ask you for that as my choice of stakes."

"Your choice of stakes?"

"*Dame!* didn't we bet—I, that there would be some accident because there always is one, and you that there wouldn't be any."

"Yes. Very well?"

"Very well—but I consider this an accident. Don't you think it enough of one? What do you want more?"

"That is true," he murmured. "I am an idiot! It was because I was so frightened, if you only knew."

She gave him a sweet look that quite enchanted him, and put out her hand, saying:

"Thank you for having taken such good care of me, and now leave me at once."

"Can you mount yourself?"

"Not just yet. I am suffering from a feeling of general pain and very great lassitude. No, you must go and tell Monsieur de Clagny to come here in his coach, and he will take me back. Speak to him in an undertone. I don't wish grandmother to know anything about it."

As Hubert de Bernès still held Bijou's little hand to his lips, she said impatiently:

“Go quickly now, and explain to Monsieur de Clagny that he is to leave the coach on the road, and say to him that he will find me in the woods—by the side of the road—precisely where I left him a little while ago. And before you go away will you tie Patatras to a tree? Thanks.”

She gave him her sweetest look, and asked:

“It’s all arranged for this evening, isn’t it?”

“It’s all arranged,” he replied.

As soon as he had disappeared, she lay down again, exactly in the same position in which Bernès had found her. Not long after the sound of carriage wheels could be heard on the road, and Monsieur de Clagny descending from his coach entered the bridle-path. At the sight of Bijou he gave a cry of grief, and running up to her took her in his arms, exclaiming in accents of anxiety and anguish:

“Bijou! my love! my adored little Bijou!”

And like Bernès, he added, “Hear me, my Bijou! answer me, I implore you,” and pressing his lips to her hair, he clasped her in his arms.

After a while she opened her eyes, fixed those beautiful innocent orbs upon the count, and clinging tightly to him, she murmured, seeming again to slumber:

“I love you so much, and I am so happy here; if you only knew—so, so happy—I should like to stay thus forever.”

## XIV.

"COME in," cried Bijou.

Standing before a glass, she was brushing her pretty hair, that curled up crisply as the brush passed over it, filling the air with its delicate perfume.

"It is Monseieur le Comte de Clagny who has come to ask after mademoiselle," said the servant.

"After me?"

"On account of mademoiselle's fall."

"Oh, I had forgotten all about it."

And going toward the window, she asked:

"Is he driving?"

"Monsieur le Comte came on horseback, but he is in the drawing-room."

"Ah, very well, then I will go down."

As soon as the servant had gone out, Bijou quickly changed her wrapper, and put on a pair of heelless pink kid Turkish slippers, which made her feet look delightfully droll, and with her hair flowing over the pleated pink batiste collar of her long loose gown, unconfined at the waist, she ran down to receive Monsieur de Clagny.

On seeing her enter, the count arose quickly.

His face was drawn and wore a sad and weary expression. Extending her hands, which he kissed, Bijou exclaimed:

"How good of you to put yourself out so for me at such an hour; it is hardly eight o'clock. You must have left La Norinière mightily early."

"Don't let us bother about me. Tell me rather how you are feeling."

"Why, wonderfully well. You saw yesterday that I followed the paper hunt as if I had never had any fall, and in the evening, at the theater, I didn't appear ill—did I?"

"No, not exactly ill, but still I thought you were rather excited at the theater—a little feverish;" and he added sadly, "besides, I didn't see much of you there. You were interested only in Hubert de Bernès, and you greatly neglected your old friend."

She arose, and going up to him exclaimed, coaxingly:

"Oh, how could you imagine such a thing?"

"I didn't imagine, alas! I saw; and I don't blame you, my poor little girl. Youth is always attracted by youth; it is quite natural."

"Why, no," said Bijou with sincerity; "why not at all. I don't care so much for youth, in general, as all that; and I cannot tolerate youths of Monsieur de Bernès' age in particular."

"Yes, I remember that you said that to me once before. You said it the first time that I ever saw you, right here, while we were both awaiting the arrival of the guests before dinner."

Deuyse began to laugh.

"What a memory you have."

"I always have where you are concerned."

And in a voice that trembled slightly, he asked:

"Do you remember what you said to me yesterday?"

"Yesterday?"

"Yes, yesterday, when I was holding you in my arms, trembling like a little bird."

Appearing to reflect, and opening wide her eyes, which at that moment resembled pale violets, she replied:

"No, I do not. I have forgotten. I was slightly stunned by my fall, you understand."

And as Monsieur de Clagny remained speechless, she continued:

"Come, now! what did I say that was so interesting?"

Regarding Bijou attentively, who listened to him with an air of amusement, and parted lips, he repeated slowly:

"You said 'I am so happy, if you only knew—I should like to stay thus forever.'"

"I don't remember having said that, but in

any ease I did well to say it, because it is quite true, you know."

Drawing Bijou to him, he asked:

"Wouldn't it really distress you to have me always near you like that?"

"Why, no, it wouldn't distress me! Oh, no, not at all."

"Really and truly?"

"Really and truly; but why do you ask me?"

"For no reason. Do you know if your grandmother is up?"

"She never gets up before half-past eight or nine o'clock, particularly when she goes to bed late, as she did last night; it was nearly two o'clock when we got back."

"And you are as fresh and as pretty as if you had slept all night. Tell me, could I see your grandmother? I should very much like to do so."

"Have you anything to say to her? or is it any message that I can give her for you?"

"No, I must speak to her myself."

"But she will probably make you wait 'a bit,' as they say here."

"Well, I will wait."

Bijou regarded Monsieur de Clagny with astonishment as he walked up and down the large room, and with curiosity aroused she questioned:

"What is the matter with you? for surely something must be troubling you."



“Why?”

“Why, yes, you go on marching backward and forward. Oh! I once saw Paul de Rueille walk up and down just like that.”

“I also observed him—it was on the evening of the La Balne, Juzencourt & Co. dinner, while you were singing.”

“Not at all. It was one day when he was going to fight a ridiculous duel, and he didn't know whether he ought to tell Bertrade or not.”

“And what did he do?”

“I believe that he didn't tell her.”

“Well, he was made of sterner stuff than I.”

“Are you going to have a duel?” said Bijou eagerly.

“You might call it a duel—and an absurd one unquestionably—a combat against an impossibility. You can't understand that, my poor dear little Bijou.”

“And you fancy that grandmother will understand you better than I?”

“I don't know; in any case she will listen, and she will sympathize with me.”

“Well, I too—I will listen to you and sympathize with you.”

His face expressed real suffering as he said:

“I do not wish to be pitied by you.”

“Then you don't like me.”

Monsieur de Clagny made a sudden gesture,

then stopped himself and with a calmness that belied the worried look in his eyes and the tremulousness of his voice he exclaimed:

“Yes, I like you, I like you very much.”

Then taking up his hat that he had laid on a piece of furniture, he walked rapidly toward the door that opened on the terrace, saying:

“I am going to wait in the park till your grandmother shall be ready to receive me.”

But as soon as he saw that Bijou had left the drawing-room he came back and seated himself in an attitude expressive of weakness, suddenly aged by some painful preoccupation. The marchioness did not keep him waiting long. On entering, she exclaimed, all smiles:

“You are wonderfully early, Clagny.”

Then observing her old friend's worried look, she demanded anxiously:

“Ah! *mon Dieu!* what has happened to you?”

“A misfortune.”

“Tell me what it is.”

“That is exactly what I am here to do at this early hour. Do you remember that when I came here the first time, fifteen days ago, as I was admiring Bijou, how you reminded me that she was your granddaughter, and might be my own?”

“Yes.”

“I answered you that I knew it quite well,

but that all that was only reasoning, and that young hearts reason but seldom and very badly."

"Perfectly—very well."

"Well, I am in love with Bijou now; I love her with all my heart."

"*Patatras!*"

"Ah! you are very consoling."

"*Dame!* my poor friend, what do you want me to say to you? you don't cherish any hopes of marrying Bijou, do you?"

With eyes full of tears, and a choking voice, he replied:

"No, I have no such hopes, and still I implore you to tell your granddaughter what I have just confessed to you. I am fifty-nine years old; I have an income of six hundred thousand francs; I am neither bad nor repulsive, and I adore her as she will never be adored by another."

"But think for a moment; you are——"

"Thirty-eight years older than she. This difference is to me, above all, one to be dreaded; yes, I am aware of it, and I accept all the danger of this disproportion."

"And she?"

"She—she will decide either for or against me. She is twenty-one years old; she is no longer a child; she knows what she is about."

"That doesn't prevent me from having some responsibility, and from——"

“Ah! you see; you fear that she may consent.”

“Fear? indeed, no; I am convinced that this idealistic little creature dreams of a husband quite different from yourself.”

“And if by chance—oh! understand thoroughly that I don’t expect it—but if by chance you should be mistaken, what would you do?”

“What would you wish me to do?”

“I should wish nothing. I fear that you may use your influence with Bijou.”

“No, I shall say what I think it is my duty to say—no more.”

“Then you are going to speak to her?”

“Yes.”

“Would you like me to come back in a little while?”

“Oh! no, give me till to-morrow. I shall probably not speak to her until this evening; but, in fact, that doesn’t hinder you from coming to dine here, if you care to; it is for the—for the answer that I wish to put you off until to-morrow.”

“If she refuses, I shall go away.”

“Where to?”

“Can I tell? My life will be over. I shall go to pieces in some out-of-the-way corner.”

“You reasoned like that twelve years ago, and here you are to-day, I will not say younger.”

The marchioness paused, then smilingly resumed:

“And why shouldn't I say it? You appear to me younger now than you did then. You are a wonder, my friend, no one would take you for more than forty-five.”

“If what you say were only true.”

“It is, I assure you; but all the same that doesn't prevent you from being fifty-one.”

Monsieur de Clagny arose.

“Adieu,” said he, “till to-morrow.”

And he added with a pathetic smile:

“Or rather until this evening. Yes—for as the end of the day approaches I shall be seized with an unconquerable desire to see her again, and I shall come, as I did yesterday, and Thursday, and every day.”

He seized Madame de Bracieux's hand and pressed it nervously, murmuring:

“In the name of our old friendship, I pray you, be kind to me.”

All during breakfast the marchioness appeared preoccupied, and on several occasions Monsieur de Jonzac asked his sister:

“What is the matter now? Have you the blues?”

“My aunt must have gone to bed very late,” said Jean de Blaye; “I heard you all come in—it must have been two o'clock.”

Then addressing himself to Bijou, he said:

"Well, did you amuse yourself? Was it pretty?"

"Charming," said the young girl abstractedly.

"That little Lisette Renaud is really delightful," said Monsieur de Rueille. "She has such great sad blue eyes. Didn't you also like her, grandmother."

"Yes," replied Madame de Bracieux, "she is most attractive, and she has an admirable voice. I was amazed to find anything like that at Pont-sur-Loire; amazed also at the elegance of the audience; there were a great many pretty well-dressed women there."

"But almost all were in pink," exclaimed Denyse; "I remember noticing that."

"It was owing to you," said Monsieur de Rueille. "The ladies of Pont-sur-Loire always see you in pink, and as you are to them *le dernier cri*, they also dress in pink."

Seeing that Bijou looked surprised, he asked:

"Isn't my little elucidation clear?"

"It is clear," replied she, laughing, "but purely imaginary. No one, my poor Paul, pays the least attention to me." And as Madame de Rueille turned toward her, she said:

"What do you think about it, Bertrade?"

"I think that you are much too modest."

"Oh, yes," said Giraud, regarding the young

girl with intense admiration, "Mademoiselle Denyse is indeed too modest. Yesterday at the theater every one's eyes were fixed upon her, and the prima donna herself never ceased to——"

"You are dreaming, Monsieur Giraud. I never observed that any one noticed our box; but even if they did, it doesn't necessarily follow that they were looking at me."

"Evidently," said Henry de Bracieux, "it was grandmother who so greatly interested the natives."

"No, but it might have been Jeanne Dubuisson."

"That is true. The little Dubuisson girl is such a novelty at Pont-sur-Loire. The sight of her would be sure to cause a sensation."

Bijou shrugged her shoulders.

"You all of you know that I have a perfect horror of exciting attention, and you are all the time saying these things to torment me."

"If you have a horror of attracting attention," cried Pierrot, "that big Gisele de la Balue doesn't object—no, indeed. There is a person who would gladly change places with you. Yesterday, at the paper-hunt luncheon, she was going for everybody like an overgrown fly, even though Monsieur de Bernès shook her off."

"He is very nice, little Bernès," said the

marchioness. "I saw a good deal of him last evening, and I was very much pleased with him. He is unaffected, well-bred, and not stupid."

Jean de Blaye, observing that Bijou's face wore an expression of indifference, demanded:

"You don't seem to be of grandmother's opinion."

"Oh! *Mon Dieu!* Yes."

"Confess, now, that you lack enthusiasm."

"Well, I confess that I do."

"Ah! and what fault have you to find with him?" said the marchioness, turning to her granddaughter.

"Why, none, grandmother—none at all. I think he is very much like other people. I'm not wildly enthusiastic about him—that is all."

"I think," said Monsieur de Rueille, "that the person about whom you will be wildly enthusiastic is yet to be born. You are very kind, very indulgent. You find every one passably nice; but particularly nice—ah!—that's quite another matter."

"You are exaggerating."

"Am I? Very well. Then tell me of any one man who thoroughly suits you."

"Why, Monsieur de Clagny, for instance."

"So you approve of him," said the marchioness—you approve of him, then? But how?—not enough to marry him, I presume?"



"No," replied Bijou, laughing, "not enough to marry him."

As they were leaving the table Jean de Blaye said:

"Has any one any errands for Pont-sur-Loire?"

"What!" said Bijou in surprise, "are you going to Pont-sur-Loire like that—all alone? What in the world are you going to do there?"

"What am I going to do there?" he repeated, with some hesitation, "why, I have some errands."

"Will you take me with you?"

"Take you with me—why?"

Ever since the evening on which he had confessed to Bijou that he loved her he had avoided all occasions of being alone with her. As to herself, her manuer toward him and Henry de Bracieux had not undergone the slightest modification. She was as unrestrained, as cordial as before she had refused her hand, and seemed to have quite forgotten that they had ever asked for it.

"But, what is the matter? Don't you wish to take me with you?" said she in surprise.

Ill at ease, fearing the *tête-à-tête*, and not daring to refuse to take Bijou before them all, he replied, affecting to joke:

"Why, yes. On the contrary, I am highly flattered at the honor that you are so kind as to confer upon me."

"Ah! now you are nice."

"Yes, I know I am charming; but you must have some one to accompany you besides myself, because I have some business to attend to."

"Oh!" said Denyse, in a disappointed tone, "won't you let me go with you?"

Madame de Bracieux now entered.

"Why, my dear Bijou, in any case you cannot, both of you, go together like that. Even though Jean is your second cousin, such a thing wouldn't answer. You must take old Josephine with you, and then it will be quite correct."

After a short silence the marchioness resumed:

"But what have you to do at Pont-sur-Loire?"

"Some shopping, grandmother. You forget that there is always some shopping to be done for the house; and then I shall go to see Jeanne. This is just the day that all Monsieur Spiegel's time is taken up; so I shan't interfere with their billing and cooing."

"They don't look to me as if they did much billing and cooing," said Monsieur de Jonzac. "I was observing them yesterday. Either I am very much mistaken, or the prospect of this marriage is somewhat dim."

"Why do you think so, Uncle Alexis?" questioned Bijou, with an anxious air.

"Because the little girl seems sad to me, and the professor indifferent; haven't you remarked it?"

"No," she replied, "I am not particularly observing."

On their way from Dracieux to Pont-sur-Loire, Bijou and Jean maintained a strict silence. When they reached the town near the station, they met Madame de Nézel, who was coming from "The Pines" on the half-past two train. On seeing her, Bijou started and her lips moved as if she were going to speak, but she contented herself with giving her cousin one of her sweet searching glances. Jean, who appeared embarrassed, pretended not to see the young woman, who, instead of going toward the center of the town, turned into a little street that ran through vacant lots and gardens. When Bijou got out of the carriage with old Josephine at the Dubuisson's door, she inquired:

"Where shall I find you again?—and at what time?"

"At the hotel. I shall tell them to have the horses harnessed at six o'clock, if that suits you."

"Six o'clock," said she, in astonishment; "three hours and a half for shopping—in Pont-sur-Loire!"

Wishing to avoid Bijou's inquiries, Jean

somewhat impatiently offered to leave sooner, but she refused, saying:

“No; why should you? I am charmed at the idea of having more time to stay with Jeanne.”

Mademoiselle Dubuisson was at home. Denyse saw that her face wore a sad expression, and that her eyes were hollow.

“What is the matter now?” she demanded; “aren’t things going on well?”

“No, not very well.”

“Is it—is your *fiancé*——”

“He is still the same.”

“Which means——”

“That I think he has even grown a little more indifferent; but there is something else that has upset me this morning.”

“Ah! what is it?”

“Oh! something that has no connection with me at all, but which has pained me all the same.”

And avoiding Bijou’s glance, she continued:

“You know Lisette Renaud?”

“Yes—well?”

“Well, she died this morning.”

“Died?—of what?”

“They believe that she killed herself.”

“But how?”

“With morphine. You can understand that they didn’t say much about it before me; but

I inferred that it was on account of a discussion that she had with Monsieur de Bernès."

"When?"

"Yesterday, after the play—or [this morning—papa and Monsieur Spiegel spoke of it at breakfast, but vaguely and covertly."

"It is awfully sad, and I can understand why it has affected you."

"Indeed, yes; and still more so as at this time the sorrows of lovers particularly appeal to me." Then with a mournful smile she added: "And with reason."

"That poor little prima donna!" said Bijou, in a tone of regret; "as far as my taste is concerned, I don't care much for theatrical women, but this one seemed so nice, and she really sang well. What a pity! and Monsieur de Bernès must feel very badly about it."

"Do you think that those who cause others to suffer, are ever very unhappy?" said Jeanne, still looking away from Bijou; "as to me, I do not think so; those who are unconscious cause suffering without being aware of it; while those who are conscious cause others to suffer because it amuses them, and in neither case do they feel any remorse."

As she continued pensive, with a far-off look in her eyes, Bijou passed her hand gently over them, saying:

"Don't think any more of such sad things,

my dear Jeanne; your grief will not change what has happened, and you are doing yourself harm to no avail. Come, let us talk about the review, about *chiffons*, about no matter what. Ah, *à propos de chiffons*, does your gown fit you?"

"It fits me, but it isn't becoming."

"'Tisn't possible."

"On the contrary, it is very natural. I haven't your complexion; I am paler than you and that shade of pink makes me look still paler, and then I am almost thin; so this little pleated waist, that adapt itself so charmingly to what your uncle calls your 'curves,' makes me look too straight up and down; but then it's of no importance."

"How of no importance?"

"Why, can't you see, my dear Bijou, that whether we'll or ill-dressed, the mediocrity that I represent passes unperceived beside beauty like yours."

Raising her eyes to heaven, with a serio-comic air, Bijou exclaimed:

"Your [point of view is altogether wrong, my poor darling."

Then suddenly changing her tone she said:

"At what time will you go to the races to-morrow?"

"I don't know. Papa has to decide that with Monsieur Spiegel. Ah! tell me now, will

you go early to the Tourville's ball? I shouldn't like to get there before you."

Denyse looked at her watch.

"I must run away," she exclaimed; "they want some gardenias at the house for boutonnières, and I don't know where to find any. Some one spoke to me of a gardener near the station."

"Near the station? I have never seen any there but market-gardeners, not florists."

"Yes, it appears there is one in that little street, you know, at the right of the wharf."

"Lilac lane; I know perfectly which one you mean; but there is nothing there but market gardens, some lots for sale, and some small houses that the officers rent because they are near the barracks."

Bijou arose.

"Still," said she, "I am going to look there."

Denyse was the first to arrive at the hotel. Jean de Blaye came a little late; he looked sad and worn. Madame de Nézel had kept the appointment that she had made with him, but only to give him back his freedom, for which he had no further use, and which he had not dared to refuse, and unhappy and discontented with each other they had been compelled to remain imprisoned for a long time in the little house belonging to one of De Blaye's

military friends, because Bijou, accompanied by old Josephine, had roamed up and down the street part of the afternoon. She passed and repassed, seeming to search for some trace with a persistency that Jean could not understand and which greatly annoyed him. Perhaps, thought he, at three o'clock, when we were near the station, she saw Madame de Nézel go into Lilac lane, and in that case did she wish to assure herself of what she suspected? Was she then so curious and crafty?—this Denyse whom he so much loved, and who quite unconsciously had made a shipwreck of his life.

He excused himself for his tardiness and helped Bijou into the carriage, who assured him that he had come in time. And then just as he was seeking some pretext to question her she said:

“Do you know you are going to have your gardenias for to-morrow?—but it was hard to find any, I can tell you. In order to get them I have had to spend part of the day in running all over Pont-sur-Loire; they sent me into horrid little streets where I got lost and where I couldn't find anything.”

Pleased at this proof of Bijou's innocence, Jean exclaimed unguardedly:

“Ah, that was why you were loitering about in Lilac lane?”



Fixing her large eyes upon him in surprise she asked:

“How did you know that? did you see me?”

“Not I,” he replied quickly, “but one of my friends.”

“Who was it? do I know him?”

“I don’t think so—he is one of the officers in Bernès regiment. Ah! did you know the poor little prima donna that you heard last night? well, she has committed suicide.”

In a tone that silenced all conversation on the subject Bijou replied:

“Yes, I know it it’s a great pity.”

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At four o’clock Monsieur de Clagny arrived at Bracieux with a heart palpitating at the thought of again seeing Bijou, and of seeing her as she was every day, still free and unrestrained, as she would still be ignorant of his request. He was much disappointed then to learn that she was at Pont-sur-Loire, and that she was there with Jean. And as he asked the marchioness to tell him frankly what she inferred from any chance remark on the young girl’s part, she then replied that she no longer dared to mention the subject, Denyse having declared before everybody that very

morning that she thought Monsieur de Clagny charming, but did not care to marry him.

He received the shock without showing too much weakness, and insisted that Bijou should be informed of his request that evening; she would then have until to-morrow to reflect; and that was what he wished. Denyse and Jean returned just at dinner time. When they came down every one was seated at the table and was talking of the death of poor Lisette Renaud; Monsieur de Rueille had been out on horseback, and had met some of the officers on campaign duty, who had given him the true history of the case.

"It is terrible," said Bertrade, "to think that this poor little thing should have killed herself—she who was so young and so lovely."

In a strange voice that resounded through the dining-room Giraud exclaimed: "It is just when one is young that one should kill oneself; one cannot then be forced to suffer long."

## XV.

THE marchioness had not wished to speak to Bijou that evening. She feared to disturb her slumbers, and it was only on the morning of the following day that she sent for her to come to her room. The young girl arrived in gay spirits, and pouted a little when her grandmother announced that she had something very serious to say to her.

"It concerns," began Madame de Bracieux, "a great friend of mine, as well as of yours."

"Monsieur de Clagny?" interrupted Bijou.

"Yes, Monsieur de Clagny. You must have observed that he liked you very much, haven't you?"

"I also like him very much—very much, indeed."

"Of course; but you like him as you would a father, or a charming uncle, and he does not care for you as he would for a daughter or a niece. In fact, you are going to be very much surprised."

"Surprised at what?" demanded she, timidly.

"At—he wishes to marry you."

"He too?" murmured Bijou in amazement.

"What do you mean by 'he too'?" said the marchioness, likewise in amazement; "who else wishes to marry you, that you should say 'he too'?"

Denyse blushed, and replied:

"I ought to have told you before, grandmother;" then seating herself on a footstool at Madame de Bracieux's feet, she continued, "but everything has been in such confusion lately, with the paper hunt, the theater, the races and balls, that I haven't had a moment to spare. Besides it wasn't a matter of any great importance."

"Ah, you think so, do you?"

"*Dame!* as I hadn't any wish to marry either of them."

"But who? who do you mean? of whom are you speaking?"

"Of Henry and Jean, yes. Jean spoke first for Henry, who it appears had commissioned him to find out if I would authorize him to ask you for my hand. I answered that it was you and not me whom he should have addressed."

"You are a true Bijou, dear."

"But that it really didn't matter, as I didn't wish to marry him."

"Isn't his fortune sufficient for you?"

"As to that, I know nothing about it, and then, it's all the same to me, for Henry

wouldn't suit me as a husband at all. I know him too well."

"Ah, and Jean?"

"Neither should I care to have Jean for a husband. That is what I told him when, after having seen that I refused Henry, he resumed the affair on his own behalf."

"They are going on finely—my grandchildren. Now I understand why, for several days past, they have been acting as if they were possessed."

And after a short silence the marchioness concluded:

"I now know your answer to my poor Clagny."

"How do you know it?"

"Because if you don't wish to accept either of your cousins, who are each, in their particular style, very distinguished, it is highly improbable that you should care to accept your grandmother's old friend."

"But he too is distinguished?"

"That is quite true, but he is nearly sixty years old."

"He doesn't look it."

"Nevertheless he is."

"I know it, but that fact doesn't prevent me from being no more averse to marrying him than to marrying Jean or Henry."

"You don't know what marriage is—you can't understand."

"Yes," said Bijou slowly, "I think I do, grandmother."

"All this isn't telling me what answer I am to give to Clagny."

"Is he coming here to-day?"

"I am expecting him any moment."

She started, then after a moment's reflection said:

"You can tell him, grandmother, that I am very much touched, highly flattered that he should ever have thought of me, but that I don't care about being married yet awhile."

Then leaning her head on her grandmother's knees she murmured gently:

"Because I am so happy here with you."

"My Bijou! my darling Bijou!" murmured Madame de Bracieux, kissing the pretty face held up to her, "you know that you are my greatest joy, but you cannot always remain with your old grandmother. I don't say this to you to compel you to make a marriage that would be pure madness."

Denyse raised her eyes and demanded:

"Madness, but why?"

"Because Clagny is thirty-eight years older than you, and because he will be on the wane when you are in your zenith, and because——"

Bijou had arisen on hearing a carriage stop before the door.

Then looking out of the window she ran off saying:

“Here he is.”

During breakfast Madame de Bracieux announced in a tone of indifference:

“Clagny is going away; he came to say good-by to me this morning.”

Bijou suddenly raised her head.

“He is going away?” exclaimed Jean de Blaye; “why, he looked as if he had taken root in the country.”

“Oh,” said Monsieur de Rueille, “father Clagny’s roots never strike very deep.”

Bijou turned to her grandmother and anxiously inquired:

“When is he leaving?”

“Why, at once—to-morrow, I believe—but we shall see him this evening at Tourville. He will go to the ball to meet all those to whom he wishes to say good-by.”

“And isn’t he going to the races?”

“No, he will be engaged in packing his trunks.”

“And our review to-morrow,” cried Denyse in despair; “he promised me so many times to come and see it.”

The marchioness regarded her granddaughter, and thought that even with a tender heart youth is decidedly without pity.

Bijou’s *entrée* to the Tourville’s ball was a genuine triumph; in the gown of rose crêpe of the hue of her skin she was truly a vision most lovely and rare.

"Just look at little Dubuisson," said Louis de la Balue to Monsieur de Juzencourt. "She has sought to resemble Mademoiselle de Courtaix. She has copied her toilette exactly, and see what she looks like—her maid, to put it mildly; what is the reason?"

Monsieur de Juzencourt replied with a hoarse laugh:

"The reason is that if the envelope is similar the contents are not the same."

"Isn't she going to be married?—little Dubuisson."

"Yes, she is going to marry a young Huguenot, who must be here in some corner or other. Ah!—no he isn't in any corner; there he is like all the others hovering about Bijou."

"And you? why don't you imitate them?"

"I—I shall certainly marry, because some day or other I suppose I shall have to; otherwise one's parents complain—on account of the name, you know; but as to hovering about like a butterfly—ah! *ma foi*, no, my tastes don't run that way."

And walking up to Henry de Bracieux, he remarked:

"Isn't it hot? you are lucky not to show it. Although you look like a Hercules you have such a complexion."

"Oh, bother my complexion!" cried Henry,





*The Bride at the Church.*



in a loud, clear tone, and leaving little La Balue standing in the middle of the room, he went in search of Jean de Blaye, who from a distance was mournfully regarding Bijou, bewildered in a maze of dances for which six suitors at a time were greedily clamoring.

When Monsieur de Clagny approached wishing to greet Denyse, she said, without even returning his salutation:

"Grandmother told me that you were going away. I am sure it is on my account."

He bowed in assent. Then she took his arm, and drawing him into an almost deserted room, she implored:

"I beg of you—I beg of you, don't go away!"

Greatly moved he replied:

"I beg you in my turn, Bijou, not to ask impossibilities of me. I have not been able to see you without becoming as mad as the others. I have been dreaming, as madmen dream. Now, that all is over, I must try and become sane once more, and forget my dream; and in order to do that I must go far away, very far away."

"Did you think that—that I would say yes?" she demanded.

"You were always so good to me, so delightfully sweet and confiding, that I had hoped—*Mon Dieu!* yes—that perhaps you would allow yourself to be loved."

"Then," said she thoughtfully, "it was my fault that you entertained such a hope."

"It wasn't your fault; it was mine. One hopes for what one longs for."

"Yes, I am sure I have acted toward you as I should not have done."

Her eyes filled with tears and she murmured very gently:

"I beg your pardon——"

"Bijou!" cried Monsieur de Clagny, quite overcome, "my Bijou! it is I who ought to beg your pardon for having made you sad, even for a moment."

"Well, then, be good; don't go away, at least not to-morrow. Promise me that you will come to Bracieux to-morrow, to see us act our review. Oh, don't say no!"

And fixing her beautiful luminous gaze upon him, she added:

"You will not regret having come."

Then, stopping Jean de Blaye, who was passing by, she begged him coaxingly:

"Won't you ask me to waltz, please, you waltz so well."

And, leaning on his arm, she disappeared under Pierrot's very nose, just as he was running up to claim his waltz.

"Let your cousin alone," said Monsieur de Jonzac, who, seated on a divan, was watching them dance. "You are much too young to

ask young girls to dance with you; I mean girls who are really young like Bijou."

"Ah, and at what age can I ask them? not exactly at yours, I suppose?"

"You have a very queer way of talking."

"It was very stupid of me to come here, instead of staying with Monsieur Giraud and Monsieur l'Abbé."

"Ah! in fact, why didn't Monsieur Giraud come? Bijou asked for an invitation for him."

"Yes, but he didn't care to. He has been very sad for a long time; he eats nothing, he never sleeps any more; instead of going to bed he spends the night in walking on the banks of the Loire."

"Do you know what is the cause?"

"I think it is Bijou."

"What do you mean by 'Bijou'?"

"Yes—like Jean, like Henry, like Paul. You know, papa, that they are all running after her, *s'pas*—without saying anything about Father Clagny, who doesn't count."

He paused for a moment and concluded with a mournful air:

"And myself, for I also don't count."

"You are greatly exaggerating," said Monsieur de Jonzac, quite convinced that his son was right, but not wishing to agree with him.

"Bijou is certainly very pretty, and it isn't surprising that——"

Pierrot interrupted him quickly, exclaiming:

"It isn't only that she is pretty! She is so kind, and clever, and gay, and everything. One has every reason to like her, haven't they now, papa? and if I were only twenty-five!"

"If you were twenty-five, my poor little man, she would treat you just as she does the others."

"That is quite possible," replied Pierrot philosophically, but none the less chagrined.

Then pointing to Bijou, who was standing in the middle of the room talking with Jeanne Dubuisson, he said:

"Isn't she pretty, *hein*, papa? Look at her. She is dressed exactly like Jeanne. Their gowns are precisely the same, 'stitch for stitch,' as Mother Rafut says. I am sure if you were to mix them up, when they were off, you couldn't tell one from another afterward, while in this way—when they're on them—why, they don't resemble each other in the least. Oh! I say, papa, do you think I might venture to ask Jeanne Dubuisson to dance?"

"*Ma foi!* yes. She is kind-hearted enough to accept."

She did accept, in fact, and went off on Pierrot's arm. Then Monsieur Spiegel came up to Denyse, and asked her for the waltz that was just beginning, but shaking her head she replied:

"I am so tired, if you only knew!"

Still he insisted, saying:

"Only give me one turn, won't you? ever since the beginning of the evening I have been unable to get even one little waltz with you."

"No, I beg of you," she answered, "I should like to rest, I——"

Then suddenly changing her tactics, she exclaimed:

"Well, no! I feel that I am fibbing badly. I am not at all tired, but I don't wish to waltz with you, because——"

"Well, because?"

"Because I am afraid of making Jeanne feel badly, so there it is!"

"Making Jeanne feel badly," he repeated in surprise, "but why?"

"What I am going to say to you may sound very conceited, but I must say it all the same. Well, I think that Jeanne adores you to such an extent that she is jealous of any one who comes near you, or speaks to you, or who even looks at you."

With raised eyebrows, his gentle face suddenly grown stern, Monsieur Spiegel demanded in displeasure:

"Did she tell you so?"

Bijou replied with the constrained and awkward haste of one who sees herself obliged to lie;

“Why, no; why, no; it was I who guessed it without being told. I love Jeanne so dearly, don't you see, that I can divine all her thoughts, and I should be so unhappy to cause her any trouble, or even a shadow of anxiety. Do you understand what I am telling you?”

“I understand that you are an angel of goodness, mademoiselle, and that those who love you are quite right in doing so.”

Bijou, with her eyes fixed on the ground, breathing with some effort, her color suddenly deepening and with slightly quivering nostrils, listened to the young professor without making any reply.

Then putting his arm around her waist, and seizing the soft little hand confided to his care, he drew her into the midst of the dancers. Monsieur Spiegel waltzed charmingly *à trois temps*; so a vision in rose with half-closed eyes, and parted lips revealing her dazzling little teeth, her waist encircled by the young man's arm, she flew around as long as the orchestra continued to play. Many times without seeing her she passed by Jeanne, tossed about by Pierrot, who trod upon her feet, and pounded her up recklessly against any piece of furniture that chanced to intervene. And when, at intervals, Jeanne paused to take breath, Pierrot talked to her volubly about sports of which she knew absolutely nothing.



"You see," said he proudly, advancing his enormous foot and formidable knee, "I'm not much of a dancer, but I'm a splendid football player. Our school team is coming this winter to have a match with the Pont-sur-Loire team. You ought to see it. It's going to be very *chic*. As to me, I am full-back, and you will see some fine touch-downs."

As Jeanne, without replying, followed her *fiancé* with an anxious eye, who passed and repassed before her, delighted to guide Bijou in this sweet and rapid whirl, he asked:

"I am boring you—I know; will you take another turn?"

"No," said she, in a changed voice, "I don't feel very well. I am too warm. Will you take me to papa, who is playing over there? I should like to go home."

While they went to find the placid Monsieur Dubuisson, Bijou stopped Monsieur Spiegel beside the orchestra and said laughingly:

"Why, you are really wild about it, but I must have a moment to breathe in—besides the waltz is ended."

She regarded the four unhappy musicians, pitiable to behold, with their shining coats, their rumpled shirts, and their streaming foreheads, then suddenly exclaimed:

"Ah! Monsieur Sylvestre! good-evening, Monsieur Sylvestre; ah! really, I never expected to see you here."

The poor youth suddenly raised his head, and murmured, while fixing his eyes on Bijou—eyes of a tender blue, where could be read an infinite distress:

“Nor did I, mademoiselle, expect to meet you here.”

## XVI.

BIJOU, after having gone to bed at five o'clock in the morning, slept for two hours, and still, when she entered the marchioness' room the next morning, she was as fresh as if she had slept the whole night through.

"Grandmother," said she, "I have reflected a good deal since yesterday."

"About what?"

"About what Monsieur de Clagny asked you to say to me."

"Ah!" said Madame de Bracieux, annoyed at having this matter again come up when she had thought it quite disposed of. For somewhat selfish, like almost all old people, she judged it useless to discuss sad and painful subjects unless to give relief.

"I have been reflecting," continued Bijou, "and then last night at the ball I saw Monsieur de Clagny."

"And—the result of these reflections and of this interview?" inquired the marchioness with some anxiety.

"Is that I have changed my mind."

"What is that you are saying?"

"I mean to say that, with your permission, I will marry Monsieur de Clagny."

"Come now! you won't, really."

"And why not?"

"Because it would be madness."

"Why, no, grandmother; on the contrary it would be very sensible. If I don't marry him, I shall never again in my life have a moment's peace."

"But why?"

"Because I saw that he was profoundly and fearfully unhappy."

"Evidently—but that won't last."

"Yes, I am sure that it will; and I have already told you that I liked Monsieur de Clagny more than I have ever liked anybody except yourself. So, then, the idea of his being made unhappy through me, and possibly to a certain extent through my own fault, would be terrible to me, and would render me far more unhappy than he."

"But you would be still more so if you were to marry him. Listen to me, my Bijou."

"No," said Bijou, stopping Madame de Bracieux, as she wished to speak further.

"Say no more, grandmother—for I have decided, quite decided, to become the wife of Monsieur de Clagny, whom I tenderly love."

And as the marchioness made a gesture of dissent, she repeated firmly:

"Yes, tenderly, and the proof is, that the thought of marrying him does not frighten me, while the idea of marrying any other man causes me a feeling of repulsion."

Then kneeling down before the marchioness, she murmured:

"Say that you consent, grandmother; say it, I beg of you."

"You will soon be twenty-two, and I cannot control you as if you were a little girl. So, then, I consent, but without any enthusiasm, I can tell you; and I implore you to reflect further, my Bijou; for, urged by your kind heart, and tender pity, you are about to commit an irreparable error."

"I have no need to reflect further. I have done nothing else since yesterday, and I know that in this alone shall I find happiness, or at least what most nearly resembles it. You won't mention this to any one, will you, grandmother?"

"Ah! *Seigneur!* You may rest easy on that score; if you think that I am in any hurry to announce such a marriage, to behold every one's expression of horror and amazement, you are mistaken, my darling."

"Above all, say nothing to Monsieur de Clagny. I shall take such pleasure in telling him myself, this evening."

"But he told me that he wasn't coming."

"He has promised me to do so."

Then raising her bright face she added:

"And now I must go and attend to the decorations, and to the footlights, which won't light, and to my costume, which isn't finished."

The marchioness took Bijou's head in her beautiful hands, still soft and white, and replied, while embracing her:

"Go, and may heaven forbid that we should ever have cause to regret—you your goodness in consenting, and I my weakness in yielding."

The Dubuissos and Monsieur Spiegel had promised to come at four o'clock; there was still one scene to rehearse that did not go well.

Bijou, who was engaged in gathering flowers, went to meet the cab in which they came, and was surprised to see only Jeanne and her father.

"What have you done with Monsieur Spiegel?" she inquired:

It was Monsieur Dubuisson who replied with embarrassment:

"He is coming—he is coming with your cousin De Rueille, who was at Pont-sur-Loire and offered to bring him."

"Don't disturb your grandmother," said Jeanne. "Papa isn't coming in now; he has his treatise to prepare, and he will do it while he is taking a walk in the park."

And as soon as Monsieur Dubuisson had gone away she resumed:

"If Monsieur Spiegel and I had no parts in the review, and if we were not afraid of spoiling everything, we wouldn't have come."

"You wouldn't have come?" said Bijou, in astonishment, "and pray why not?"

"Because we are in a very false and ridiculous position."

"Are you?"

"Yes, we are; our marriage has been broken off."

"Broken off!" repeated Bijou, in consternation; "broken off and why."

Very calmly, but with downcast eyes, Jeanne replied:

"Because I was sure that he loved me but little, or not at all—so then I told him this morning that I had not sufficient courage to accept the life of suffering that I foresaw, and I released him from his engagement."

"*Mon Dieu!* is it possible you have done this—and that you don't regret it?"

"Not at all. I am very unhappy, but more calm."

Bijou looked her full in the eye and asked:

"And it is—it is on my account, isn't it? on account of Monsieur Spiegel's attentions to me that you have broken it off?"

As Jeanne made a gesture of assent, Bijou resumed:

"Then you really thought that your *fiancé* was making love to me?"

"That he was making love to you—perhaps not—but certainly that he was in love with you."

"Well, even so."

"What do you mean by 'even so'?"

"Why, it couldn't lead to anything."

"Yes, to suffering, and, perhaps, to hoping."

"Hoping—to marry me?"

"No! yes, I can't tell—to hoping vaguely—I don't know what."

"And do you think that I can bear the thought of being the cause, though quite an involuntary one, of your unhappiness?"

"It isn't in your power to change what exists."

Bijou appeared to reflect, then said:

"And if I were going to be married?"

Then concealing her face in her hands, she continued in broken tones:

"Monsieur de Clagny wishes to marry me."

"Monsieur de Clagny?" said Jeanne, amazed; "why Monsieur de Clagny is sixty."

"I had said no—I am going to say yes."

"You are mad."

"Not the least in the world. I am practical. The remedy is perhaps a little hard, but it



can't be helped. I love you, my dear Jeanne, and the thought of seeing you unhappy fills me with terror."

"I assure you that even if you were to marry Monsieur de Clagny, I would not marry Monsieur Spiegel. He has said so many unpleasant things to me that come what may I shall never forget them."

"Unpleasant things? about what?"

"About my jealousy—he has told me that it was ridiculous—and still, I had never complained. I concealed my jealousy from him as well as I could. Only last night at the ball, as I felt ill, I asked papa to take me away, and he was displeased; he thought that I was sulky."

"All that will be forgotten."

"No, you see, Bijou, that you would be committing the worst of follies in marrying an old man."

"An old man! That's absurd! Monsieur de Clagny doesn't impress me at all as an old man. I should certainly prefer to marry a younger man and one who would quite suit me, but still——"

Jeanne put her arm around Bijou's neck, and kissing her, said:

"You will wait quietly for the one who 'quite suits you;' you have plenty of time."

"No, I have quite decided; all that you can

say now would be useless, and in spite of all that you say, when the cause of your little quarrel shall have disappeared, the quarrel itself will disappear. Come, kiss me again, and tell me that you love me."

"Well," said Jean de Blaye, who had just arrived with Monsieur Spiegel, "are you ready? are we going to rehearse?"

In the last few days he had become nervous, reckless, requiring to be amused, trying to keep himself from thinking.

Quickly drying her eyes, Denyse replied very quietly:

"Why, yes, we are ready; we were only waiting for you."

And gracefully and unaffectedly she gave Monsieur Spiegel her little hand, which he kissed, saying:

"You are not too tired after having been up so late, mademoiselle?"

Then involuntarily regarding Mademoiselle Dubuisson's slightly sallow complexion, he added:

"You are even fresher than you were yesterday."

Jeanne went up to Bijou, and looking at the professor, said to her, with an expression of intense grief in her sweet eyes:

"You see, your remedy would be quite useless—he is incurable."

The little review was acted before a numerous and highly appreciative audience. Bijou was so beautiful in her Hebe costume, so virginal, so pure, so delightful to look at, that after the play, when she wished to go and put on a ball gown, they all begged her to remain just as she was.

As she was running away into a little room, in order to avoid the compliments of the guests, she was stopped by Monsieur de Rueille, who said in a bitter tone:

“So this is the costume that was going to be very proper? this costume that to please me you were going to ask John to change?”

And as Jean came up with Henry de Braeieux and Pierrot, he thus addressed him, ironically:

“Accept my compliments! You seem to thoroughly understand the art of slightly draping pretty women; only, in your place, where women, and above all, young girls, of my own family were concerned, I should make more respectful designs.”

After having carefully regarded Bijou, Jean replied:

“I don't know what's come over you. The costume is charming and altogether unobjectionable.”

Bijou now intervened:

“Besides,” said she gently, “there are only

three people who have any right to concern themselves about my costume—grandmother, myself, or my husband.”

“If you had one?”

“Yes, *eh bien*! I am going to have one.”

Jean de Blaye shrugged his shoulders incredulously, and Bijou resumed:

“I assure you that it is quite true. I am going to be married.”

“To whom?” asked Monsieur de Rueille anxiously.

“Ah, that's a good joke,” said Pierrot.

“Who are you going to marry?” demanded Henry de Bracieux; “who is it?”

Then, taking the arm of Mousieur de Clagny, who had just entered, she said in a jesting tone:

“I am going to tell Mousieur de Clagny.”

And turning to him, she added:

“Only we will go outside, for I am smothering here.”

Following Bijou's pink peplum with his eyes, Pierrot murmured:

“Isn't she æsthetic this evening! Monsieur Giraud ought to find her perfect, as he has always said that she wasn't formed for modern costumes.”

“Oh!—in fact—where, then, is Giraud?” asked Jean de Blaye. “He disappeared right after dinner and hasn't been seen since.”

Pierrot explained that he must have gone for a walk on the banks of the Loire, as he was in the habit of doing every evening; besides he was getting more and more peculiar and subject to sudden fits of gayety or melancholy.

On that very morning he had left the study to go to Madame de Bracieux's room, who had sent for him to translate an English letter; and then he hadn't come back for a long time afterward, explaining that he had not dared to knock at the door, because he had heard the marchioness talking with Mademoiselle Denyse. And from that moment he hadn't said a word.

"Where the deuce has he gone?" asked Jean de Blaye.

Imitating the little merchants of the boulevards, Pierrot exclaimed, with a nasal inflection:

*"Ou est le Bulgare, cherchez le Bulgare."*

When she was alone with Monsieur de Clagny, under the great trees, Bijou said, very gently:

"I came home this morning, feeling very unhappy to have caused you grief. I thought that perhaps I had been too affectionate, too unrestrained—that I had made you think what wasn't so. Isn't it true?"

"It is true. Then you have no affection for me at all?"

"You know very well that I have."

"I mean to say that you like me as you would some old relation?"

"Better than that."

"In fact, you don't care enough for me to—to love me as a husband?"

"I don't know. I am explaining how I feel toward you very badly. When I first saw you I thought you very handsome, very charming, too; and since then I have felt, when you were present, as if I were inhaling an atmosphere of gentle tenderness. I seem to breathe more freely. I am gayer, happier then; and never, never have I felt like that before."

Much moved by what she was saying, anxious also as to what she had yet to say, the count, without replying, pressed Bijou's arm.

"Then," she resumed, "I thought that, as I loved you more than I had ever loved anyone else, and as, besides, I should never be consoled for having caused you so much sorrow, that the best way was to marry you."

"Monsieur de Clagny stopped short, and asked, with a choking voice:

"Then you consent?"

"Yes."

"My darling! my darling!" he murmured.

"I said so to grandmother this morning," continued Bijou, "and I must confess she didn't seem to be very much pleased, and she did all that she could to make me change my mind."

"I can understand that."

"She thinks that it is madness in you, and in me, to marry when there is such a disproportion of age. And then—she didn't say so, but I could very well see that something was worrying her—that troubles me in a much less degree."

"And that is——"

"The disproportion of fortunes. It appears that you are awfully rich. Grandmother said so yesterday when she told me that you had asked for my hand."

"What difference does it make, my Bijou, whether I am a little more or less rich?"

"It makes a great deal of difference, above all, with grandmother's ideas. Oh! not that she thinks it humiliating for me to be married without anything myself, for I have nothing in comparison with you. No, she looks upon marriage as a partnership or an exchange of values. Give me what you have and I will give you what I have. You have your name, which is a good one, and your money, which is considerable. I have my name, which is sufficiently attractive, and my youth, which decidedly counts for something."

"Well, then, in what way does the disproportion of our fortunes distress your grandmother?"

"Ah! there it is. She adores me—grand-

mother, and she calculates that as I am thirty-eight years younger than you, you might die before me; and that, after having lived in very great luxury for many years, after being accustomed to a condition of excessive ease, to which I am so far unfamiliar, I should find myself but badly off and very unhappy at an age where one cannot begin their life anew and when one suffers from the effect of certain habits which they cannot readily renounce."

"You must understand perfectly, my adored Bijou, that everything that I possess will be yours. My will is already made, in which I give you everything, even if you were never to become my wife."

"Oh! she says that a will may be destroyed."

"If your grandmother prefers it, I will settle everything on you in our marriage contract."

Bijou began to laugh.

"Then she will imagine that we may be divorced, and that a divorce renders any previous settlements null."

"And if I acknowledge in the contract that half of what I possess is yours, and if, besides, I give the remainder, reserving only the interest."

Bijou shook her head, and with a sudden movement, full of coaxing tenderness, and winding her pretty fresh arms around Monsieur de Clagny's neck, she said to him:



“I only ask happiness of you, and of that I am sure you will give me sufficient. I sincerely hope that you will live for a long, long time. And what will it matter to me if, when I am old, I shall find myself relatively poor again?”

Covering Denyse's face and hair with passionate kisses, he replied:

“And as to me, I could never survive the thought that death might overtake me without your future being assured as I wish it to be.”

“Do not speak of such things,” she murmured. “I like to think that I shall never leave you more—never.”

Striving in the darkness to look into Bijou's eyes, he anxiously demanded:

“Do you think that you could ever love me a little—as I love you?”

Without replying, she put up her mouth, and at this moment a noise of voices suddenly separated them. At a distance of a few yards several people were talking in low tones, and the dull, measured tread of feet could be heard as if quite near them, and a heavy weight were being borne. Lights passed in the darkness, and Monsieur de Clagny exclaimed:

“It is very strange; one would say something had happened.”

But Bijou, who had stopped, her heart beating hurriedly in her anxiety, likewise impressed with the strangeness of this procession, holding

the count back by the arm, now quietly replied:

"Why, no; they are some people returning from the farm. They are now employed at the castle during the day, and when they have eaten, they go back home."

"It seemed to me, on the contrary, that those with the lanterns were going toward the castle."

She had again taken his arm, and once more he trembled with joy, as he pressed to his side the pretty creature who had promised to give herself to him. They came back slowly by way of the avenues, and passed many carriages that were taking away the guests.

"Oh!" said Bijou, in surprise, "they are going away already; and the cotillon! Is it very late?"

As they reached the front door they encountered the La Balues, who were getting into their carriage, and Denyse inquired in surprise:

"What? Are you going away? But why, then?"

Monsieur de la Balue muttered some unintelligible words, while his son and daughter shook hands sadly with Bijou.

And Monsieur de Clagny, beginning to be anxious, exclaimed:

"They are acting very strangely. Ah! what is that there?"

In the vestibule, where a large pool of water was streaming over the floor, some servants were going and coming hurriedly and fearfully, and Pierrot appeared, his eyes filled with tears and his hands full of flowers; Madame de Rueille following him and also carrying some flowers. Bijou stopped short, speechless, but Monsieur de Clagny ran up to the young woman and demanded:

“What has happened?”

“Monsieur Giraud has drowned himself,” replied Bertrade. “Yes, Monsieur Giraud has drowned himself—they have just brought him in—it was the miller who found him near the mill dam.

And as Pierrot regarded her in consternation, the flowers trembling in his long arms, she added, in a hard voice:

“Oh! yes, I know; grandmother has forbidden it to be mentioned before Bijou, but I—I wished that she should know it.”

## XVII.

AS SHE was waiting at the church door for Uncle Alexis to rejoin her, Bijou turned around, pushed back her long white satin train, and drawing the folds of her veil about her, gave a swift glance at the brilliant multitude pressing toward the portal; that luminous and searching glance that nothing could escape. And first of all, the tall form met her view of Jean de Blaye, advancing with a weary and indifferent air, conversing with his cousin, De Rueille, who, in his turn, seemed nervous and constrained. Henry de Bracieux, with irritated air, was listening to the marchioness abstractedly, while she was giving orders to the grooms. Pierrot, whose coat had caught in the carriage door, endeavored to release it with his huge hands encased in snowy gloves, but all to no avail. With conscious, hurried air, a monstrous roll of music in his hand, Monsieur Sylvestre was seen plunging into the dark shadows of the staircase that led upward to the gallery, and the Abbé Courteil, with his two pupils, one on either side, now rapidly passed by, avoiding sedulously to glance where Bijou could be seen.

Jeanne Dubuisson, a little thin, was standing by her father's side and waiting for the crowd to let them pass. Behind were handsome ladies with their cavaliers from Pont-sur-Loire, and all the neighboring chateaux, mingled with peasants from Bracieux. His large square shoulders, and his red complexion well defined against the background of blue sky, Charlemagne Lavenue in holiday attire was seen advancing in gigantic strides. And while with downcast eye, Bijou appeared oblivious to all, she reveled in the brilliant sun shining in honor of her nuptial day, and drank full deeply of the joy of living, being beloved, and beautiful. Uncle Alexis offering her his arm and saying, "whenever it may please you," drew her from her ecstatic reverie. Graceful and willowy, she then began her stately march up the broad aisle, to the grand organ's solemn swelling tones. A cabman, who had come into the church to catch a glimpse of the wedding, exclaimed, on seeing Bijou pass:

"*Nom d'un chien!* she's a daisy, that bride."

To which a farm servant of "Mait" Lavenue replied with earnestness:

"Oh! but isn't she though? and then, *eh bie!* why she is even better than she looks!"

THE END.

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